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# CHRISTIANCOURIER



## Christianity headed south

Will Braun

Elisabeth Elliot's 1957 classic, *Through Gates of Splendor*, told of "the martyrdom of five American missionaries in the Ecuador jungle." Elliot's husband was among the five men involved in "Operation Auca," named for the remote tribe they were trying to reach.

After making initial contact with some Aucas, the men were ambushed by the tribe on a jungle beach, "defeated," as the dust cover says, by "primal fear and hatred."

The publisher billed it as "the boldest and most dramatic missionary exploit of modern times . . . a collision of darkness and light."

I read the book a couple decades back. I found it gripping.

But the global narrative of Christianity has shifted dramatically since then. The story is no longer about noble white Christians boldly penetrating dark, pagan lands abroad. Now, churches in the global south flourish while those in North America and Europe settle uneasily into a post-Christian era in which traditional religion is increasingly crowded out.

According to information put out by the World Council of Churches, a century ago 80 per cent of Christians in the world lived in the global north. Today, less than 40 percent do.

The choice of a Latin American Pope is indicative of this shift. The Lutheran World Federation, the Mennonite World Conference and

the World Communion of Reformed Churches, which includes the Christian Reformed Church, have also chosen leaders from the global south — Chile, Colombia and South Africa, respectively.

So far the Mennonites are the only church to move its global headquarters to the south, having relocated from Strasbourg, France to Bogotá, Colombia within the last two years. The Lutherans and Reformed churches are both based in Geneva, Switzerland.

### Interdependency

I spoke about the southward shift with César García, who took over from an American as General Secretary for the Mennonite World Conference in 2012. Today, only a third of Mennonites live in North America and Europe. Holland — the birthplace of Menno Simons, for whom we Mennonites are named — has fewer Mennonites than Angola, Vietnam, Guatemala or 15 other southern countries.

Though the centre of Christianity has shifted southward, García cautions against idealization of southern churches. Numbers alone do not tell the whole story. Not all growth has been healthy, he said via Skype from Bogotá. While it is impossible to generalize across all southern churches



The days of understanding missions as north-to-south are finished. The key now is interdependency.

— which are as diverse as northern churches — he said a self-centred, prosperity-oriented gospel is too common.

García singled out Benny



Much has changed in world missions since the first recorded North American baptism in 1769, at the "Canyon of the Little Christians."

Hinn — the controversial California-based televangelist, miracle worker and prosperity pedlar — as an influential force in southern churches, including some Men-

nonite congregations. Best-selling American writer and pastor Rick Warren is also popular. Less popular, said García, are Anabaptist

Continued on page 3

## Whither Obamacare?

Mike Wevers

The political rhetoric on the future of health reform is heating up in the United States as Congress resumes in September. The Tea Party faction within the Republican Party wants to consider all options to stop further implementation of the *Affordable Care Act*, the hallmark legislation which President Obama's administration successfully enacted to begin its health reform plan.

One option the Tea Party is promoting is to withhold support for new legislation needed to fund federal agencies. If the legislation withholds funding for *Affordable Care Act* initiatives, Obama would not sign it into law. If the Republicans refuse to approve legislation in the House of Representatives to extend funding for agencies, the United States government

programs may grind to a halt by October. According to reports, Republican House Leader John Boehner is reluctant to endorse such a plan because of the widespread backlash the Republicans may endure for shutting down government.

The rollout of the Obama health plan, however, is not without its difficulties. Some large companies have indicated they may have to stop delivering spousal plans for their employees because of the extra cost of new health care coverage. On the other hand, supporters point out the Obama plan will make health care insurance available to millions who never had access before. Paul Krugman, a top U.S. economist, writing in *The New York Times* said in time people will come to appreciate the improved health care system



The cost and delivery of health care is a challenge for the Obama administration.

that Obamacare will deliver, even though they may not attribute its improvement to Obama. He pointed out that some people have wondered if new state run health care options would be better than Obamacare, not realizing their very delivery is enabled by the *Affordable Care Act*.

So the cost of health care coverage, and health care delivery, is a challenge for the Obama administration. While some will experience absolute savings, especially

Continued on page 2



## News

## Sea to sea brings new perspectives for cyclists

Angela Reitsma Bick

The epic, nine-week cycling adventure known as the Sea to Sea ended on Aug. 24, raising almost \$1.8 million dollars so far to help fight poverty around the world. Organizers still hope that last minute donations will bump those numbers up to their goal of \$2 million.

Participants who tackled the whole route biked 6,178 km (3,839 miles) from Newport Beach, CA to Staten Island, NY, with roughly two weeks in Canada along the way.

"A sense of community was established pretty quickly," Adam Wiersma told *Christian Courier* at a stop for water and snacks at Grace CRC in Cobourg, Ont. He cited intergenerational friendships as a highlight of the trip. The nearly 200 cyclists ranged in age from 14 to 74 years old.

Marc VanOtteren, who also participated in the 2008 Sea to Sea, waxed philosophical about his many hours on the bike. "The world looks better at 15 miles per hour," he said. That's not a bad average speed for any cyclist, especially when this group covered between 80 to 150 km every day.

Staying on the Nahavo reservation in Rehoboth, New Mexico, made a lasting impact on Rick DeJonge of Hamilton, Ont. Seeing poverty first hand, he said, is key to understanding it.



Marc VanOtteren, Julia Miedema, Adam Wiersma and Shannon Marcus: grateful recipients of what they call "real hospitality" from churches coast-to-coast.

"People don't choose to be poor. We saw families where the men had to leave to find work." He appreciated the tour for the chance it provided to stop in communities that are normally bypassed in motorized vehicles.

Jasper Hoogendam of Cold Springs, Ont., echoed that theme on his blog, *Living In God's Pocket*. "The money raised can be the catalyst to help fund systemic change or to

provide resources to empower those who experience poverty," he said, but making connections with people in poverty is even more important. That awareness, Hoogendam believes, will impact personal lifestyle choices and break the cycle of poverty in the name of Christ.

Shannon Marcus, a cyclist who completed the full tour, agrees: "I bike because I am inspired to reach past cynicism and know that small efforts combined do make a difference in the world," she says.



Jasper Hoogendam cycled 10 percent of his two weeks on the tour by unicycle, raising awareness of the links between handicaps and poverty.

## Whither Obamacare? *continued*

those who could ill afford catastrophic care, the majority will probably see an increase to their personal health care costs. Part of the plan was to redistribute some costs from the federal government to individuals and businesses, and some of it is simply because the overall cost of delivering health care will continue to go up, but less so than if it remained un"reformed."

## Contemporary culture weighs in

The issues surrounding health reform in the United States continue to be given voice in more than congressional political battles and Internet weblogs. The pervasiveness of the issue is reflected in much contemporary entertainment. Indeed, in one current hit television program, *Breaking Bad*, the catalyst which sent the main character down a path of drug manufacture, mayhem and murder was the need to pay for his cancer treatments. As well, the absence of universal health care is the major premise of the big budget sci-fi film *Elysium*. Both offer some insight into the challenges of affordable health care.

## Shady deals to afford health care in New Mexico

As *Breaking Bad* has developed through its five seasons, covering two years in the life of its lead character Walter White, it's been hard for viewers to remain sympathetic. We have witnessed the docile high school science teacher and father of two turn progressively more monstrous. His all-out bid to dominate the supply of illegal methamphetamine (crystal meth) to the United States's southwest market has overshadowed its rudimentary beginnings, which used simple high school lab instruments to produce drugs to pay for his cancer treatment.

The basic necessity to pay for treatment gave way to a secondary goal of providing sufficient funds for his family in case of his death, either from cancer or as a result of his drug trade wars. In doing so, we watched Mr. White make a pact with the devil in which he would supply the best crystal meth to the market in return for a never-ending supply of cold hard cash, all based on the moral relativism that addicts are going to find supply anyway so he may as well give them the best, and of course, at a premium price. One of the ironies built into the program is that Walter's principal adversary in the Drug Enforcement Agency is his brother-in-law, Hank. And



Walter White, the anti-hero of the TV show *Breaking Bad*, deals drugs to pay for his cancer treatments.

the irony doesn't end there; in the course of his investigation Hank gets severely injured, and his expensive rehabilitation is paid for by Walt's drug money.

Walter well understands that his pact is with the devil. It is difficult to watch the almost surrealistic but apparently too true crazed life in which drug traffickers exist. But the show has not shied away from dealing with the bigger questions of life. Walter recognizes that if there is God of justice, he and his cohorts will be living a hell in their afterlife. And Christian viewers would be hard pressed to extend our grace, notwithstanding that the origins of his fate arose from the need for health care that he could not afford.

## An elitist health care future

While *Breaking Bad* is an engrossing television drama dealing with today's real life issues, *Elysium* moves us 100 years into the future. It is much more heavy-handed in dealing with the disparity of health care coverage. In that not too distant future, Earth is a dystopian world where most of humankind is oppressed by the robot police force the earth's population manufactures to serve its distant masters. Those masters live on a space station near Earth, but which could as well be a million light years away because no earthling is welcome.

*Elysium* (a variant on the Elysian fields, which were believed to be the final resting place of heroic souls in Greek mythology) is a preserve of the rich where they protect their "fountain of health" found in each home – an MRI-like medical device which heals all diseases and reconstructs body parts as required. Because no one would die on *Elysium*, there is no room for the billions who are suffering on Earth. Needless to say, health delivery on Earth

appears to have denigrated to not much more than meeting basic clinical needs in an overstressed, understaffed and under-resourced system (sounds discouragingly similar to our current challenges).

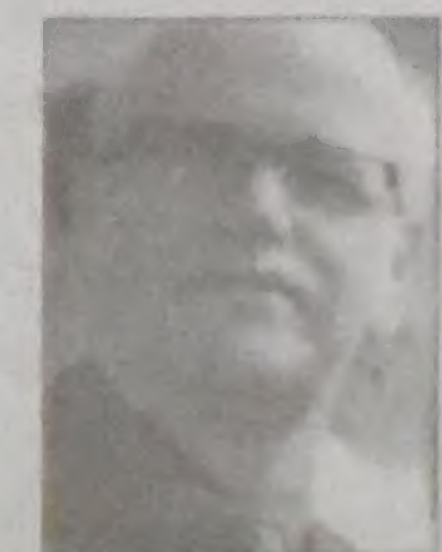
Our hero, played by Matt Damon, is able to get into the space station and fix things, giving universal access to the miracle device. So that the messianic nature of his mission is not lost on viewers, he has to sacrifice his life to get it done. However, unlike *Breaking Bad*, where discussions on belief and God's plan are a part of Walter White's character development, *Elysium* essentially ignores any belief system, except one reference that our hero was raised in an orphanage served by a nun. So while *Elysium* may have made its point, *Breaking Bad* achieved it through a much better viewing experience.

## Republican aspirations will temper the debate

While Canada continues to struggle with how to afford and deliver comprehensive health care based on the accepted principle of universal access, the United States debate continues on Obamacare. The *Affordable Care Act* suffers from trying to move our American colleagues to more universal access while maintaining old health delivery structures. While single payer systems are readily demonstrated to be more efficient, Americans will not surrender a private delivery system based on third party insurance companies and health management organizations.

Certainly, no society should force its users to become criminals to access care. And not many would support a disparate health care system that serves only the rich well. But more so in the United States than Canada, money can get you better access. Some of the Republican Party leadership is well aware that many Democrat supporters see Obamacare as a partial solution to this American problem. Hence, that leadership will tread carefully, notwithstanding the Tea Party belligerents. The Grand Old Party can ill afford to alienate even further those Democrat voters they will need to regain the Presidency. Republican strategists certainly do not want to pave the way for a Damon-like leader who will save Obamacare and in so doing keep the Democrat lock on the Oval Office in 2016.

Mike Wevers resides in Edmonton, where he's looking forward to watching the last episodes of *Breaking Bad*.





## Column

Christianity headed south *continued*

Setri Nyomi of Ghana currently leads the World Communion of Reformed Churches, of which the CRC is a member.

theologians like John Howard Yoder, John Driver and Mark Baker.

In terms of how churches in the north and south relate, García said the days of understanding missions primarily as a north-to-south endeavour are “finished.” Patronizing attitudes must be left behind. The key now is “interdependency.”

“Churches in the north need the churches in the south,” he said. Generally speaking, the north can learn from the south about how to be a church that emphasizes community and “organic growth instead of institutionalized structures.”

The south can learn about “strong roots,” “good foundations” and how to deal with contentious issues in healthy ways, García said.

As for missions, García said the model for which he has most hope is one in which ministry is carried out by multicultural teams and is done in a holistic fashion that includes church planting, education, social development and an emphasis on pacifism.

Among several examples he cited is a partnership that sees Mennonite Church U.S.A.’s Mission Network and the Colombian Mennonite Church work together in Ecuador.

For those of us in the global north, the challenge is perhaps to humbly wrap our hearts around the southward shift – a gradual process that is at varying stages in different groups – thanking God for the spiritual fervour in the south, and seeking opportunities for reciprocal north-south partnerships. ➤

Will Braun is a writer from Morden, Manitoba. A version of this article first appeared in Canadian Mennonite magazine. Used with permission.



For more info see [gordonconwell.edu/resources/CSGC-Resources.cfm](http://gordonconwell.edu/resources/CSGC-Resources.cfm)

## Christ @ Culture

Lloyd Rang



“Heavenly Father, we ask your forgiveness . . . not only for the evil that we have done, but for the good that we have left undone. For those opportunities we had to glorify you,

which we allowed to pass us by. Amen.”

This prayer – or a variation of it – was a staple at our dinner table for many years. My Dad – who was seldom one to pray the same prayer twice – often threw this idea into the list of things he would speak to God about on our family’s behalf at the end of a long day.

It has taken me most of a lifetime to understand the subtlety of this prayer, and to work through its layers of meaning.

It is, in the first place, a very theologically correct and Calvinist prayer.

These days, when we think of the doctrine of total depravity (or, probably, if we think of the doctrine of total depravity) we understand it to mean that we are totally sinful. As Francis Spufford so bluntly put it in his book *Unapologetic: Why, Despite Everything, Christianity can still make Surprising Emotional Sense*, humans have a profound propensity to “mess” things up. We can’t help ourselves. We ruin relationships, jobs, friendships – everything we touch – everywhere we turn.

That’s easy to understand, but it’s not the complete story of total depravity. What Calvin – and Augustine before him – meant by the doctrine is that humans not only do wrong, but that we have a limited ability to do what is right. That is – we can do good things, but we can’t do the kinds of good things that earn us ultimate favour with God. So, not only are we constantly messing things up – we’re also not fixing them for the right reasons.

The older I get, the more that forgotten component of total depravity – our human inability to do the right thing – makes sense to me. And that’s what makes my Dad’s prayer not just theologically correct – but emotionally true.

As an adult with a job, and a child, and responsibilities that wear me out and drag me down – I so often do the wrong thing. I often find myself being short with coworkers when I’m tired. I make sarcastic jokes with my son, instead of correcting him gently. And I’m guilty of many moral failures beyond that in other areas of my life – of gossip at church, slander on the internet, anger at my family, intimate betrayal of loved ones and selfishness all around.

But wrongdoing is easy to spot. It sits there – obvious in its corrosive and destructive power – bare and naked for all to see.

Harder to spot are the failures of goodness.

Harder to spot are those opportunities

## The good that remains undone



to make someone’s day better that we simply let pass us by.

And not only are the opportunities to do good the things that are hardest for us to do, our failure to do good is often what stays with us longest.

## Human blind spot

Right now, there’s a graduation address to Syracuse University by George Saunders that’s making the rounds on Facebook. Saunders thinks back to moments in his life where he had an opportunity to do the right thing, but just let the moment pass by. Many of them stretch right back to childhood. So Saunders concludes by asking graduates to “err in the direction of kindness” when dealing with others. And while that’s a noble sentiment, it seems a little simple to me.

Being good isn’t just something we forget to do – like watering the flowers in the morning or taking the dog for a walk – it’s something we’re really not good at. Goodness – genuine kindness towards others – is a human blind spot. A fault in our programming. Because we tend to be selfish – each believing we are the only actor in the drama of life, and the focal point and the main character of the story. We’re the centre of our own universe.

That’s why every major religion – our own included – has some variation of the “Golden Rule.”

It’s like we need a constant reminder that it’s not enough to be good to yourself – but that the same love and respect you give to yourself you must also extend to others.

I think back, as a son, to all those conversations I had with my Dad, growing up, where we argued about points of theology. Where we

bickered about politics. Where we verbally sparred and jostled about just about everything. I think back to all those conversations and I sometimes ask – did I tell him, often enough, meaningfully enough, deeply enough how much I loved him? Did I tell my Dad how much I loved and valued his wisdom, his humour, his sacrifices for his family? Was my Dad – who prayed so often for the ability to do good – the recipient of enough love and goodness from me, his son?

Probably – and honestly – not. We fail, each of us. Good remains undone, all around us. Opportunities pass us by, every day, to tell those who mean the most to us how much we truly love and value them – let alone our colleagues and friends and acquaintances.

We fail. Surely to God, we fail.

But failure is not the point. Being aware of our failure – that is the point. Because by knowing what we cannot do – by knowing what remains undone – we become aware of the need for grace. When we’re aware of how short we fall, we become aware of how much we need God to reach across the rest of the way for us.

It doesn’t mean we stop striving to do good. Instead, it gives us a prayer to say at the end of every day.

And a goal for the next. ➤

Lloyd Rang lives in Bowmanville, Ont.

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## Global Mennonite population

1958	1990	2012
79% Northern	52% Northern	33% Northern
21% Southern	48% Southern	67% Southern



## Editorials

## Finding depth in the wide world of spiritual wellness



Paul Verhoef

Spirituality – what a messy word, with no clearly agreed-upon definition. I both love it and hate it for its messiness. Either way, I'm right in the middle of it, because

the sign above our Chaplains' office door at the University of Calgary (UofC) reads "Faith & Spirituality Centre" (FSC). I'm expected to know about it, so it seems.

And then there's our recent local twist. We were asked, "What variety of 'spiritual wellness opportunities' are you chaplains able and willing to provide?" As chaplains, we are supported by our specific faith communities, but given generous space and access to resources on the UofC's campus. Our standard history of offerings includes such things as Mass (Catholic), Jum'ah prayers (Muslim), Zen Meditation (Buddhist), and Bible Studies, Worship times and the like. But with the increase of students who self-identify as being "spiritual but not religious," the UofC is wondering what other things we can offer. One of my colleagues summarized it this way: "We all know what the University wants. They want us to do our 'religious stuff' without any of the 'religiousness.' Things like Buddhist meditation, just without any reference to Buddhism." Our Zen Buddhist Chaplain wasn't so 'zen' in his response.

So we were each given the challenge of considering what "spiritual wellness" looks like in our particular faith tradition, and what we could possibly offer to the diverse community at the UofC. What follows are some of my musings.

## So what is spiritual wellness?

First off, let me back up to 1946. In that year, the World Health Organization (WHO) reframed the definition of the world



Can we cultivate deep roots in a culture of consumer-driven spirituality?

"health." They shifted us away from an illness-oriented definition towards a wellness-oriented definition. They defined health as being "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." And that definition, though it has been debated and critiqued, has not been amended since it was entered into force on April 7, 1948.

Dr. Bill Hettler, co-founder of the National Wellness Institute in the USA, was one of the many who reflected on this new direction. In 1976, Hettler expanded the WHO definition by developing an interdependent model commonly referred to as the Six Dimensions of Wellness. He named the six dimensions as physical, mental, social, occupational, intellectual and spiritual. And so it was that "spiritual wellness" became a part of the general health conversation in the public square.

## All things spiritual

In the midst of the conversations on the six dimensions, it has been said that the "spiritual dimension" of wellness has the least clarity of definition and application. Whereas physical wellness is connected to measurable concepts like nutrition and exercise, those working to define spiritual wellness tend towards less tangible words like meaningfulness, purpose, sense

of transcendence and identity.

These wide words create space for a whole variety of practices that apply to "spiritual wellness." Not only are historic religious practices seen as ways to seek spiritual wellness (prayer, worship, fellowship, sacraments, reading of sacred texts), but so are a whole swath of other "spiritual but not religious" practices like drum circles, gardening groups, service, labyrinths, knitting circles, hikes, yoga (some of these have religious histories but are practiced as religiously neutral).

In some way, this need not shock those of us coming from the Reformed and Christian worldview. After all, many of us grew up with "all things" phrases: All of Life is Religion, All of Life is Worship, and even "Everything is Spiritual."

## Spiritual wellness or deep spiritual wells?

So how should I respond to the UofC? Should I simply say, "Everything is spiritual so let me know how I can help, whether that means leading Christian prayer, planting gardens or pounding on drums?"

I don't think so. And not because all those things are not permissible – rather because all things are not beneficial (I hope you hear the paraphrase of 1 Cor. 10:23).

I am all for a variety of physical wellness opportunities: team sports, weight rooms, noon hour programs. I think the wide buffet-like variety allows people to pick and choose what works for them. But to pick and choose from a spiritual practices buffet? As others have said, that starts to feel way too consumer-driven. And I simply can't see how consumer-driven spirituality gets to things like meaningfulness and purpose. Participants might "feel uplifted" or say, "That was really nice to do" (I heard these phrases many times in the past years), but many seem to drift away when the year gets busy. That drifting from one opportunity to another doesn't seem to instill meaningfulness and purpose, I think because these are so related to depth of conviction and enduring commitment.

And it is those things, conviction and commitment, that often characterize the historic religious communities. These communities have lived "a long obedience in the same direction" (to borrow from Eugene Peterson). And in our world of shifting trends and moving targets for our desires, deep roots become stumbling points – people stumble, stop, look back and are shocked that something is actually rooted and solid.

Perhaps the best thing I can do for the UofC is not providing a few more "spiritual wellness opportunities," but to help shape a community that works towards a spiritual depth. I think the UofC needs a community that roots in the deep spiritual wells of Scripture, worship, and prayer – all those scandalously particular things.

Paul Verhoef works as a chaplain at the University of Calgary, sent and supported by the Christian Reformed Church.

## 'Tell me, since you know so much!'



Angela Reitsma Bick

"Darwin-Rap Gegen Evangelikale" the *Times of Germany* headline read last month: "Darwin Rap Against Evangelicals." It's about Baba Brinkman, a white

Canadian rapper dedicated to spreading the gospel of evolution through rhyme. Baba's been on CBC, in *Macleans*, writing for the *HuffPost* and performing at universities and other public venues across North America and the UK for years. He's also my first cousin, the oldest grandson and namesake of Dirk Brinkman.

"It's time to elevate your mind-state / and celebrate your kinship with the primates. / The weak and the strong, who got it going on?" Baba asks in *The Rap Guide to Evolution*. "We lived in the dark for so long. / The weak and the strong, Darwin got it goin' on. / Creationism is dead wrong." I've seen him, to an audience of thousands, shout "Creationism! Is!–" so the audience can fill in "Dead! Wrong!" It's startling. Not his position so much as the vehemence.



Brinkman performing *The Rap Guide to Evolution*.

When I read a recent *Banner* article, "Tomorrow's Theology" by Edwin Walhout (June 2013), I almost dropped my coffee. In it, Walhout says essentially the same thing as Baba, but without all the shouting. This time the context, not the tone, startled me. But both pieces beg the question: why so aggressive on behalf of evolution? Why the false dichotomy between the "traditional" understanding of scripture and the "established facts" of science? It's not helping shed any light.

## A slanted analogy

Walhout, a retired Christian Reformed minister, starts with a tired old scare tactic: unless we shape up sloppy doctrine, future Christians will scoff at us, just as we do to old flat-earth crazies. He twice imagines our descendants exclaiming "How could they believe all that?"

But back-up to his original analogy. Walhout compares creation doctrine to 16th-century flat earth and geocentric-universe doctrine. This is not a neutral comparison: "First, it casts scientists – and those Christian scholars who champion such science – as heroes and martyrs willing to embrace progress and enlightenment," James K.A.

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## Comment

### 'Tell me, since you know so much!' continued

Smith writes in *Christianity Today* (Sept. 2012). "Second, and as a result, this framing of the debate depicts those concerned with preserving Christian orthodoxy as backward, timid and fundamentalist. With heads in flat-earth sand, any who voice hesitation or skepticism about the 'assured/obvious' implications of evolutionary evidence are cast in the villainous role." Comparing contemporary debates on creation with 16th century ones shuts any fair discussion down before it's begun. Which is what Walhout does here, with "There is no way we can possibly continue to hold to [traditional] doctrine."

### Not either/or

Even worse, Walhout only seems to offer us two choices: between the "established fact" of evolutionary theory and the "traditional understanding" of scripture. But I have come across far more subtle gradations on the spectrum of belief when it comes to the question of origins. From the literal six-day, 24-hour creationists on the one hand to Darwinian apostles like Baba on the other, there are at least 10 positions in between. In *Origins*, published by Faith Alive, the Haarsmas explore nine ways that Christians alone understand creation and design. Oversimplifying this into an either/or debate does not help the discussion either.

Walhout likes to throw out questions like a series of gauntlets for Christians: "Where in the slow evolution of *homo erectus* and *homo habilis* and *homo sapiens* do Adam and Eve fit?" "How does Jesus fit into the ongoing process of evolution in the fullness of time?" Sometimes going on the offensive like that reveals a lack of confidence in your own stance (methinks-the-lady-doth-

protest-too-much).

"I do not share the common assumption that religion is always in need of defending," Marilynne Robinson, a writer described as a narrative Calvinist, says coolly in *The Death of Adam*. "What is needed here is a defense of Darwinism" (57). Every point on that spectrum represents a kind of faith, if by faith you mean simply believing in, without proof, one explanation for how the world came to be. No matter how many times Walhout declares contradictorily that the "theory of evolution is established fact" (three), there are too many gaps and guesses to rescue evolution from the realm of modern myth.

We are surrounded by competing stories that explain how the world was made. The intensity of the competition astonishes me. I'm OK with a bit of mystery here, with some generous orthodoxy. I'm OK with acknowledging that some scientific discoveries seem to contradict scriptural witness. They *seem* to – but there's so little we know. It reminds me of God asking Job, "Why do you confuse the issue? Why do you talk without knowing what you're talking about?"

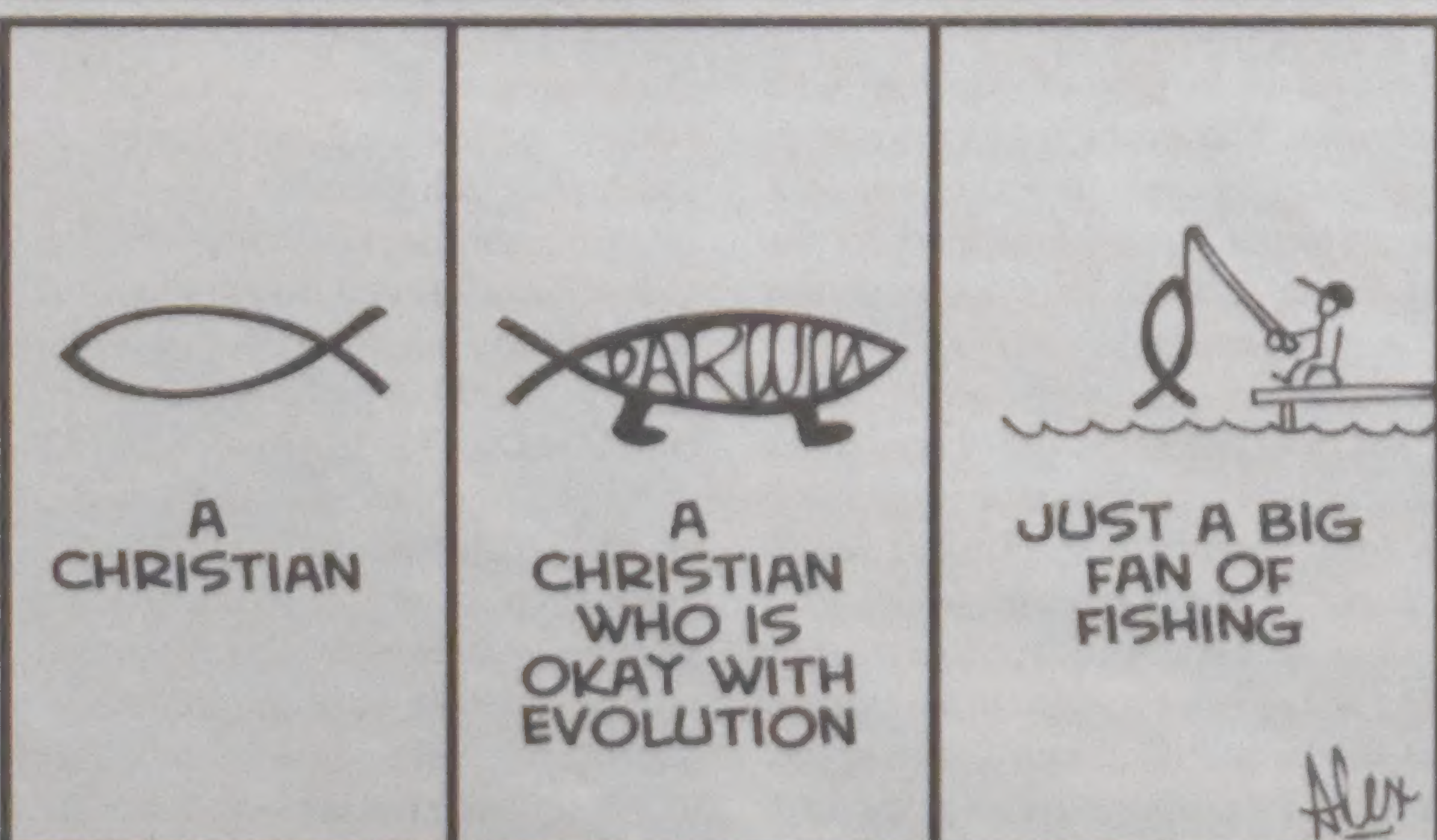
Baba would say that living with that mystery is like living in the dark. But in the end, I'm OK with that too. You can see the stars from that darkness. And what we think we know about stars – God's glory on tour (Ps. 19) – is just guesswork too. "Every grand venture at understanding is hypothesis," as Robinson says so well. Maybe all our theories deserve the same response Job got. "Where were you when I created the earth? Tell me, since you know so much!"

Angela Reitsma Bick is Editor of Christian Courier.

— A tongue-in-cheek example of a few points on the wide spectrum of belief about our origins.

## CAKE OR DEATH

by alex bales



UNDERSTANDING SYMBOLS ON CARS

## Comment

### Does 'fetus porn' unfairly traumatize?

Recently I passed by a pro-life demonstration featuring posters with graphic images of the results of abortion. The demonstration was near the office of our MP in St. Catharines, Rick Dykstra, a member of the Christian Reformed Church, who has twice voted against bills which would have addressed issues of life before birth.

At almost the same time I received through Facebook an article by Joyce Arthur, one of Canada's foremost defenders of abortion rights. Ms. Arthur rages against the use of what she calls "fetus porn" for a variety of reasons, beginning with the possible traumatic effects such imagery may have on children. Central to her argument is the contention "that fetuses are not people with rights because they live inside women's bodies." It is noteworthy that she refers to those in the womb as "people" who "live" and yet denies that they have rights.

This article made me reflect on the issue in a way I had not before. It is particularly and personally poignant to me right now because one of my daughters is expecting the birth of twins. If I shared Joyce Arthur's commitment that fetuses are not people with rights because of where they live, I would have to use very different wording for the previous sentence. I can't grasp her idea that there might be people who live without rights. So I might say that my daughter is expecting the expulsion of two invasive aggregations of cells. I could also speculate about the mystery of why those cells only acquire the rights of people when they change location.

### Real trauma

I don't want to comment now on the advisability and effectiveness of showing graphic images. Rather, I want to muse about the first reaction of Ms. Arthur and others who favour abortion. They are incensed that children, whom they say are too young to hear about or understand these images, might be confused and traumatized by seeing this.

However, children are massively ex-

posed to images that are potentially traumatizing. Most kids view daily a barrage of video images (even with sound) depicting violence in graphic detail. That trauma is not good for children either, but it is revealing that the depiction of a few silent stills of abortion is considered such a horror that it is singled out for such special vitriol.

One possibility for the backlash is that pro-choice parents are really more offended and traumatized than their children. In any case, one of the responsibilities of parenthood is to equip children to live in a world where there is a lot of human-inflicted tragedy – physical/emotional/sexual abuse, crime, accidents. Many parents, for example, will begin "street-proofing" children at or before the age when the child might be traumatized by exposure to abortion images.

### Morals overturned

But there is a significant difference between most of those threats and abortion. For most of the threats, parents can reassure the child that there is still a "moral universe" in which such things are wrong and that there are parents, teachers, police and lots of others who are trying diligently to protect children from such things. It is quite a bit more difficult to pat the child on the head reassuringly, leaving her with the thought that mommy could have done that to her, perhaps might have done it to siblings, that lots of others do it, and that eventually she will understand that all of this is to be defended. It up-ends the child's moral universe.

This is a little easier for parents who can still assure a child that abortion is not the way things ought to be and that mommy and daddy work to reduce rather than defend this tragedy for any of God's children. I would guess that children of such parents are less traumatized in the long run than those who grow up being selectively shielded.

Syl Gerritsma  
St. Catharines, Ont.

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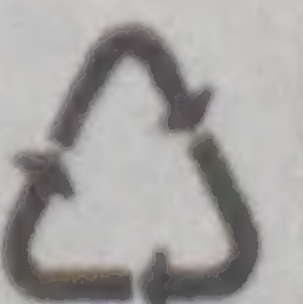
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## News

## Ontario: Antique tractors and a dedicated family help fight world hunger

AYTON, Ontario (CRCNA) – Off a dusty gravel road in rural Ontario, down a long laneway and inside rows of barns and sheds sits one of the largest private collections of antique tractors and farm equipment in the province, perhaps even the country.

This impressive collection, which had been an after-work hobby for a local farmer, John Bosomworth, became a unique fundraising tool. By opening up their farm in Ayton, the Bosomworth family and their community have now raised a total of more than \$75,000 for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB), which works to end hunger for thousands of families in need around the world through CFGB members such as World Renew.

The \$75,000 donation was matched 4-1 by the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade, and Development (formerly CIDA).

John Bosomworth died last year, but his memory and his passion for antique farm equipment and desire to share his blessings with communities thousands of miles away lives on in this rural community.

"I never realized how my grandfather's hobby would impact the world," said Megan Lair, his oldest granddaughter. Megan, along with her mother and all her Bosomworth aunts, uncles and cousins, returned to the family farm to help out with the third and final "Antique Extravaganza" held at the



Unique fund-raising tool: tractors.

Bosomworth farm on August 3 and 4.

### A tradition begins

The first, one-day Antique Extravaganza in 2006 was the idea of John's sister-in-law, Mary-Lou Holliday, who was a long-time supporter of CFGB. The Foodgrains Bank is made up of 15 church denominations and agencies who work together to respond to hunger around the world.

"At the first event, some people came with cans of food, thinking it was for a local food bank," explained Eunice Bosomworth, John's wife. Over 1,300 people came out in 2006 and raised more than \$13,000 for CFGB, which was then used by CFGB's 15 member agencies to respond to disasters and chronic hunger around the world.

In 2009, the family decided to host a sec-

ond event. Again, thousands came out to the farm and that day they raised over \$21,000.

This year the family planned a two-day "open-house" style event that allowed people from across the province to explore the barns filled with antique equipment and restored classic cars, admire the farm's unique Fjord horses and enjoy music and food.

In honour of the 30th anniversary of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, Eunice and her children, together with a planning committee that brought together six local church denominations, set their fundraising goal high, hoping to raise \$30,000.

The field next to the farm was mowed and several people directed traffic as young children and retired farmers from the community and across southern Ontario arrived to see the treasures stored in this remote farm. "It brings back old times, said Harry Driedges, a retired farmer who recognized the first tractor John ever owned.

Standing next to him was Rudy Derkson, who had taught two of John and Eunice's children in school. "I am incredibly amazed that one farmer could collect so much and still have time to farm," he said.

### Surpassing expectations

An afternoon service was held to honour John's memory and to thank support-

ers. "It is great to meet people who have been involved in supporting the Canadian Foodgrains Bank for years," stated Executive Director Jim Cornelius. "This event is a chance for me to say thank-you."

Gary Schellenberger, the MP for Perth-Wellington, also spoke at the event, commenting that he is "very proud of the Canadian government's long-term partnership with the Foodgrains Bank."

On Sunday evening, as participants sat down at long tables scattered across the family's backyard to enjoy an anniversary dinner that would wrap up the two-day event, Eunice came riding up with a grin on her face. She announced to the crowd that they had now raised over \$40,000.

"Support like this enables us to provide food and other assistance in response to urgent needs," explained Wayne de Jong, director of Disaster Response for World Renew, "such as the conflict in Syria, which CFGB is responding to with over \$4 million in assistance."

"Very few organizations have this kind of support," commented David Mayberry, the Ontario Regional CFGB Coordinator. "When you ask for help, people come forward offering their gifts, time, passion and their compassion. This event has surpassed even our great expectations." >

## Dordt College film students win award for Mozambique documentary



The film explores the need for diet and nutrition education.

SIoux CENTER, Iowa (DCC) – After four jam-packed days of filming in Mozambique using two different cameras and an iPhone, Dordt College seniors Justin Gloude-mans of Big Lake, Minn., and Jayson Korthuis of Lyndon, Wash., shot nearly all the footage needed to create a documentary that has been given the Award of Excellence, the top honour bestowed by Videographer Awards.

The Videographer Awards is an international awards program "directed by communication professionals to honour talented individuals and companies in the video production field."

The 12-minute documentary by Gloude-

mans and Korthuis was sponsored by Communities of Fusion, a group of organizations that provide opportunities for education and agriculture to people in Mozambique. Center Fresh Eggs in Sioux Center is one of the organizations that participates in Communities of Fusion. When owners Bruce and Kim Dooyema contacted the college about filming the project, Mark Volkers, professor of Digital Media Production, suggested that Gloude-mans and Korthuis do it.

The two digital media students were already in Africa on a semester-long study abroad program at Daystar University in Nairobi, Kenya. They were the first Dordt students to take advantage of the semester

exchange program.

Preparation, travel and filming were a "whirlwind," said Korthuis. "We had to be ready within about a week to go to Nam-pula, Mozambique. We scrambled to find airline tickets, and we were in a foreign country with limited Internet access."

Once they arrived in Mozambique, they went straight to work, shooting long hours for four days. "That was guerilla filmmaking at its best," said Volkers. "They had little time to prepare, and they didn't have an abundance of filming equipment available. They made the most with what little they had available to them."

The film highlighted the work of Communities of Fusion and explained the need for diet and nutrition education in Mozambique. They noted that the diets of many families consist largely of starches, with little protein. The average egg consumption is about eight eggs per person per year, compared to the United States where the average consumption is 250 eggs per person per year, and Canada, where it's 130.

The Videographer Awards is one of the oldest and most respected awards programs in the industry. There were more than 1,500 entries from throughout the United States, Canada and 10 other countries in the 2013 competition. The Award of Excellence is one of a large and growing number of awards that Dordt College and its production company Prairie Grass Productions has garnered since the digital media program began in 2005.

Gloude-mans and Korthuis's film can be viewed at: <http://vimeo.com/69552229> >

## Faith must be full-time, says Pope on Twitter

VATICAN CITY (CNA/EWTN News) – Pope Francis told his millions of followers on Twitter last month that it is impossible for Christians to have a partial or lackluster commitment to the faith. "We cannot be Christians part-time," he said on the social networking site, where his popularity is growing fast. "If Christ is at the center of our lives, he is present in all that we do."

Pope Francis was named the world's most influential leader on Twitter last month by the Switzerland-based public relation and communications firm Burson-Marsteller.

The pontiff made his comments on all nine of his accounts, which are in different languages: Spanish, English, Italian, Portuguese, French, Latin, German, Polish and Arabic. The Pope has been "tweeting" every two days since the beginning of August and nearly every day during July. His predecessor, Benedict XVI, was the first pope to use the social network, which he began on Dec. 12, 2012.

Francis now has nearly 8.7 million "followers" on Twitter, of which 3.4 million are Spanish-speakers and 2.8 million English speakers. Italians alone have just reached over one million, making it the nation with the single highest number of papal followers.

Pope Francis is the second most followed world leader on Twitter, after U.S. President Obama, who has some 34 million followers. >



## News

## United Church of Canada women spur maternal health in Tanzania

TORONTO (UCCC) – Women in the United Church of Canada announced “Success!” following a series of maternal health programs in Tanzania that they sponsored. The programs were funded by the United Church Women (UCW) as the group’s 50th anniversary project, which began in 2012.

The UCW raised over \$260,000 to support midwifery training programs run by the Morogoro Women’s Training Centre (MWTC) in Tanzania. Their goal was to help address the country’s alarming pregnancy and childbirth related death rates. Africa as a whole records some 1,000 such deaths a day. Women trained in maternal care, who then use that training in village contexts, have been shown to make a huge difference to the survival rates of women giving birth and their infants.

The first course brought 25 women from Morogoro’s outlying districts to learn and share together. The graduates returned to their communities – supplied with both medical kit and a solar LED lighting system – to work as maternal health care workers and as first aid responders.

Often these maternal health workers are the only trained health care workers accessible to local communities, as hospitals and clinics can be hundreds of miles away and transportation is limited. Their contributions to local communities are highly valued. However, the lack of transportation prevents many more potential candidates from traveling to women’s centre for training. As a result, the UCW were urged to use their remaining funds for sending trainers off-site, which they did.

### Serious dilemma

One off-site course was held in the Tarime District in northern Tanzania. Another was held in the Babati District, a remote area in the Manyara Region of the country. Still another was held in the



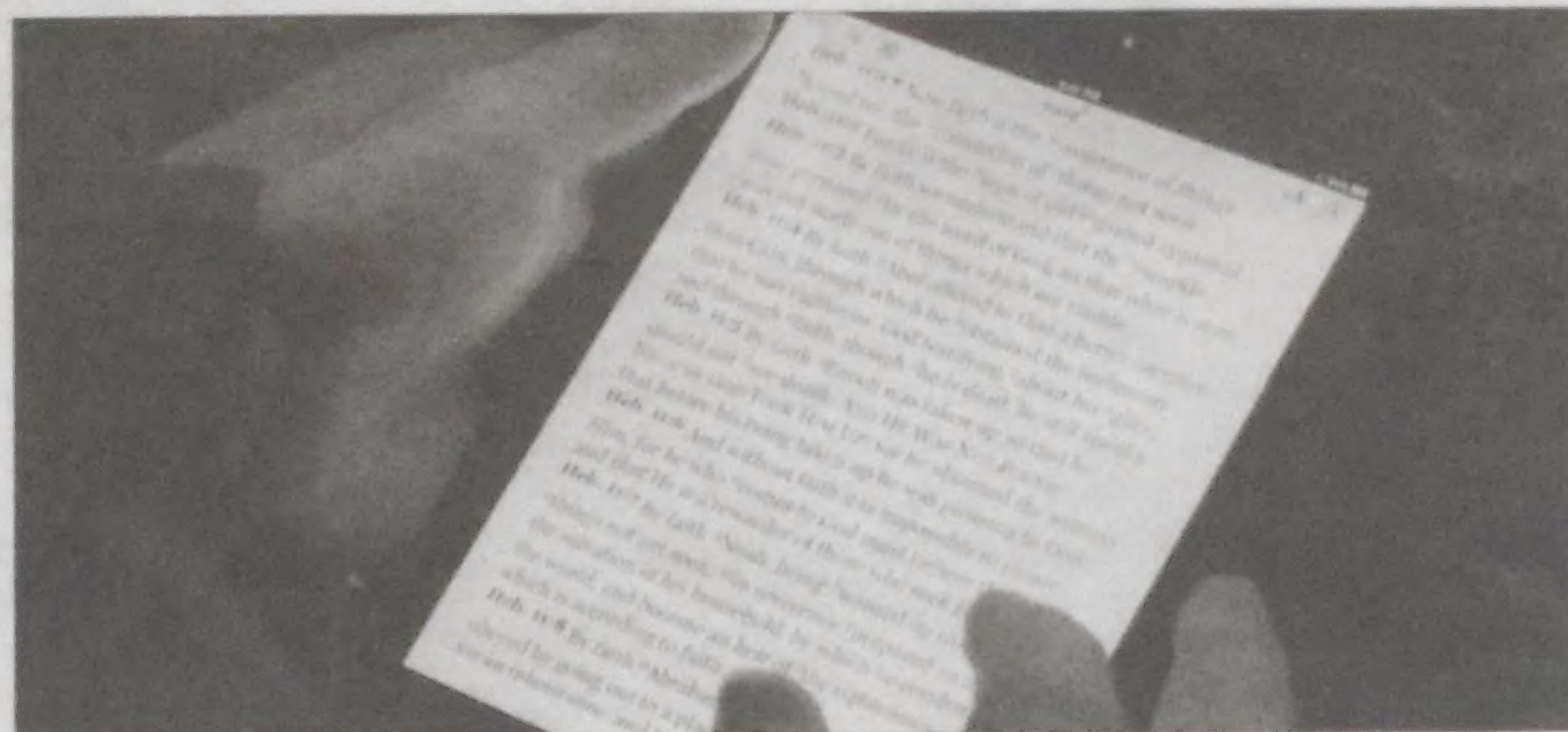
*Midwifery training makes a huge difference in the health and survival of women giving birth and their infants.*

Karagwe District in the northwestern region. The women’s centre provided coordination and support and also worked with local church group members who served as hosts for the women traveling to the course. While the church networks provided local support, women of all faith backgrounds were encouraged to apply.

Maternal health workers hold important positions in places such as the Babati District. People in each village know where the nearest worker lives. As soon as a woman goes into labour, families will send for the maternal health worker to come and assist with the birth. Most deliveries take place at the pregnant woman’s home. Sometimes, when a woman feels waiting at home might put her and her baby at risk or leave her to deliver her baby on her own, she may come in person to the worker’s home.

Some cases are referred to hospitals for specialized help and care. For many maternal health workers this poses a serious dilemma. Often the pregnant women are too advanced in labour to travel to a hospital. In these cases the workers must do their best with the tools they have. Sometimes that means getting the woman to the hospital on a stretcher carried by four people and accompanied by the maternal health worker.

The Morogoro Women’s Training Centre is an autonomous unit of the Christian Council of Tanzania (CCT), and both are Mission and Service partners of The United Church of Canada. ➤



## Wycliffe Associates to make digital Scriptures accessible in restricted countries

ORLANDO, Florida (CNF) – Wycliffe Associates is launching an initiative to use digital technology to bring the Scriptures to those living in areas where restricted religious freedom limits access to the Bible. Wycliffe Associates, founded in 1967 (not to be confused with Wycliffe Bible Translators founded in 1942) is an international organization that gives ordinary Christians “the opportunity to partner in Bible translation efforts worldwide.”

The initiative, called Operation Timothy, inspired by 1 Timothy 6:12, uses technology such as websites and mobile devices to deliver the Scriptures in a way that poses less risk for those who seek access to it.

The use of mobile phones and the Internet draws less scrutiny and gives greater access than a printed Bible, says Bruce Smith, president of Wycliffe Associates. “People in some of the most hostile regions in the world can pull up the Bible using their mobile devices and use it in public without others actually knowing what they are viewing. It is like hiding in plain sight.”

There are more than 65 countries in the world where Christians are persecuted, according to Open Doors USA. A survey by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life found that three-fourths of the world’s population live in nations where their religious freedoms are restricted. In some countries, converting to Christianity or owning a Bible is illegal and punish-

able by death or imprisonment.

A Christian known to Wycliffe Associates, whose name we cannot mention, lived in one such country and has experienced persecution throughout his life. He has been turned over to the police by his family for talking about his faith in Christ, and his father threatened to kill him for becoming a Christian. Because of his faith, he was forced to flee the country with his wife and children. Through digital publishing, Scripture and other materials will be available to people like him for viewing and downloading in places where it would not otherwise be available or accessible.

Wycliffe Associates is working to raise \$108,000 to fund Operation Timothy efforts this year. The organization says it involves supporters in “accelerating the work of Bible translation through their time, talents and treasure.” It is estimated that there are 2,100 languages that still need a Bible translation. WA partners with nationals, mother tongue translators, staff, volunteers and supporters to direct and fund translation efforts, as well as provide logistics, networking and technical support. Wycliffe Associates is striving to achieve the goal of beginning the translation of God’s Word in every remaining language that needs it by 2025. Last year, the organization mobilized 3,103 volunteers and staff members to accelerate Bible translation in 73 countries. ➤

## U.S.: Ivy league college fires African bishop for traditional Christian view of homosexuality



*Dr. James Tengatenga.*

HANOVER, New Hampshire (CNS News.com) – A black African bishop who is part of the Anglican Communion has had his appointment as head of an Ivy League college foundation rescinded because of past statements he made in line with his traditional Chris-

tian view critical of homosexuality.

In what has been called an “extraordinary move,” the new president of Dartmouth College, Philip J. Hanlon, rescinded the appointment of Dr. James Tengatenga to the William J. Tucker Foundation. Ironically, the foundation’s purpose is to focus on the moral and spiritual work of the university.

Before the Dartmouth appointment Tengatenga was bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Southern Malawi. His diocese takes the traditionally biblical view that homosexual acts are sinful.

Malawi has laws that criminalize homosexual activity. However, in November 2012 a moratorium on prosecutions was declared by President Joyce Banda until

the Malawian parliament decided whether to repeal the current laws. That decision has still not been made.

One of the groups opposed to Tengatenga’s now-aborted appointment was the Dartmouth chapter of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People). Concerning their actions, the bishop said, “Of all the groups to take the lead against a black person on flimsy grounds. So much for the advancement of colored people. . . . It is sad that such an institution can stoop so low.”

Tengatenga resigned his post as bishop in early July and was scheduled to begin his new position on Jan. 1, 2014. According to the foundation’s website at Dartmouth,

its purpose is to “educate students for lives of purpose and ethical leadership, rooted in service, spirituality and social justice.”

Philip Hanlon, who became president of the college in June, decided to revoke the bishop’s appointment because, “it has become clear to me that Dr. Tengatenga’s past comments about homosexuality and the uncertainty and controversy they created have compromised his ability to serve effectively as dean of Tucker.”

Tengatenga opposed the 2003 election of Gene Robinson, the first openly homosexual bishop in the Anglican Communion. In 2011, as reported in *The Boston Globe*, the bishop had said, “The Anglican dioceses in Malawi stood totally against homosexuality.” ➤



## Columns

Principalities  
& Powers

David Koyzis



On more than one occasion in the classroom I ask my students whether Canada is a nation. It's a trick question really, because it admits of more than one possible answer. English-speaking Canadians and those with immigrant backgrounds are likely to answer yes to my query, if somewhat hesitantly. I've not had the opportunity to pose

my question in Québec, but I imagine that I would receive a different answer in that province. For most Québécois Québec is a nation while Canada is a political abstraction encompassing two nations — one English-speaking and the other French-speaking. Even Lord Durham, respected by anglophones but vilified by francophones, famously observed in 1839 that in Lower Canada (present-day southern Québec) he found "two nations warring within the bosom of a single state."

Last month in this space I related the cautionary tale of how so many of the Middle East's Christians opted to join the Arab nationalist movements in their quest to find a secure place alongside their countries' majority populations, only to be marginalized and subsequently maligned by a growing Islamist insurgency. This change in fortunes illustrates the dangers of idolatrous nationalism.

At its best a nation is a marker of common identity capable of bringing people together across multiple divides. Although it cannot be boundlessly inclusive, in principle it does include everyone born within its territory irrespective of the parents' language, religion, birthplace or ethnicity. Americans have been the most adept at creating a sense of

## Nation at its best... and worst

belonging among their diverse population, mostly by emphasizing, not a common ancestral stock, but a shared loyalty to America's political institutions and the ideals on which they were founded. Historically, American school children learned to recite the Declaration of Independence and at least the Preamble to the Constitution of the United States. Those becoming naturalized Americans, such as my Cypriot-born father, would take an oath to this Constitution and thereby become Americans, completely and without qualification.

## Identity or idolatry?

At its worst a nation is an exclusive identity — exclusive in two senses of the word. First, it excludes those within the political community deemed not *really* to belong. If you are born in Turkey with a Greek name to Orthodox Christian parents, you may continue to carry a Turkish passport, but other Turks will doubt that you are a genuine Turk. If you are born in Croatia to Orthodox Christian parents who write with the Cyrillic alphabet, then you are likely to be viewed as a Serb, even if you've never been to Serbia proper.

Nation can be exclusive in a second sense, and this is where nationalism as an ideology enters the picture. Nationalism requires that all members of the nation, however it be defined, give it their ultimate loyalty. This loyalty must transcend other, ostensibly lesser loyalties, such as family, local community, neighbourhood, church, workplace and so forth. Here nation takes on idolatrous pretensions.

Shortly before moving to Hamilton a quarter of a century ago, one of my sisters and I thought to worship in



a mega-church near Chicago. It was the Sunday closest Independence Day, and when we sat down in the pew and looked at the bulletin, we were distressed to see that the entire service was given over to the singing of American national songs and called upon the congregation to recite, in creedal fashion, the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. Where was the Triune God? Where was the gospel of Jesus Christ? If American national identity represents nationhood at its best, it can degenerate into idolatry, especially when joined to traditional religious observance.

If Canada has not been as successful as its southern neighbour in encouraging a sense of shared nationhood, it has also not been as susceptible to the threat of exclusive nationalism either. As a nation, Canada is at its best in tolerating some ambiguity in its own identity. And if, as Christians, we follow 1 Peter 2:9 in admitting that those who are recipients of God's mercy are a "chosen nation," then we should be first to recognize the legitimate overlapping claims of real nations and less likely to fall prey to the absolutist assertions of a single overreaching nationalism.

*David T. Koyzis teaches politics at Redeemer University College. His award-winning Political Visions and Illusions will soon be published in a Portuguese-language edition by Edições Vida Nova (New Life Editions) in Brazil.*

Cross-examining  
culture

Julia Stronks



## Part I

## Gay rights and religious freedom



On June 26th the United States Supreme Court handed down two decisions that related to same-sex marriage. The decisions made front page news in Canada, which was somewhat surprising because Canadian provinces began legalizing same-sex marriage 10 years ago. Canada nationalized this process

with the 2005 Civil Marriage Act.

What are Christians to make of this public policy issue? Should our beliefs about homosexuality determine our thinking about legal recognition of a gay couple's marriage? Is marriage law the biggest challenge churches will face as people of faith consider the legal rights of the gay community?

This two-part series will do two things. The first column lays out some of the legal questions that we will be dealing with in North America over the coming decades. The second column, in October, will outline a way for Christians to think about the different roles of government and the church as we consider difficult public policy issues.

In the U.S. marriage law has traditionally belonged to the state governments. The two cases just handed down by the Supreme Court answered some limited questions but also left a great deal of uncertainty. *U.S. v Windsor* affirmed that marriage law is not for the federal government. So if a state recognizes same-sex marriage then the federal government must also recognize the marriage for things like taxes and inheritance law. *Hollingsworth v Perry* was a case out of California, ruling that once a government has recognized marriage rights for same-sex couples the state constitution could not be amended to withdraw that recognition. Neither case said anything about whether or not same sex marriage *ought* to be recognized by state

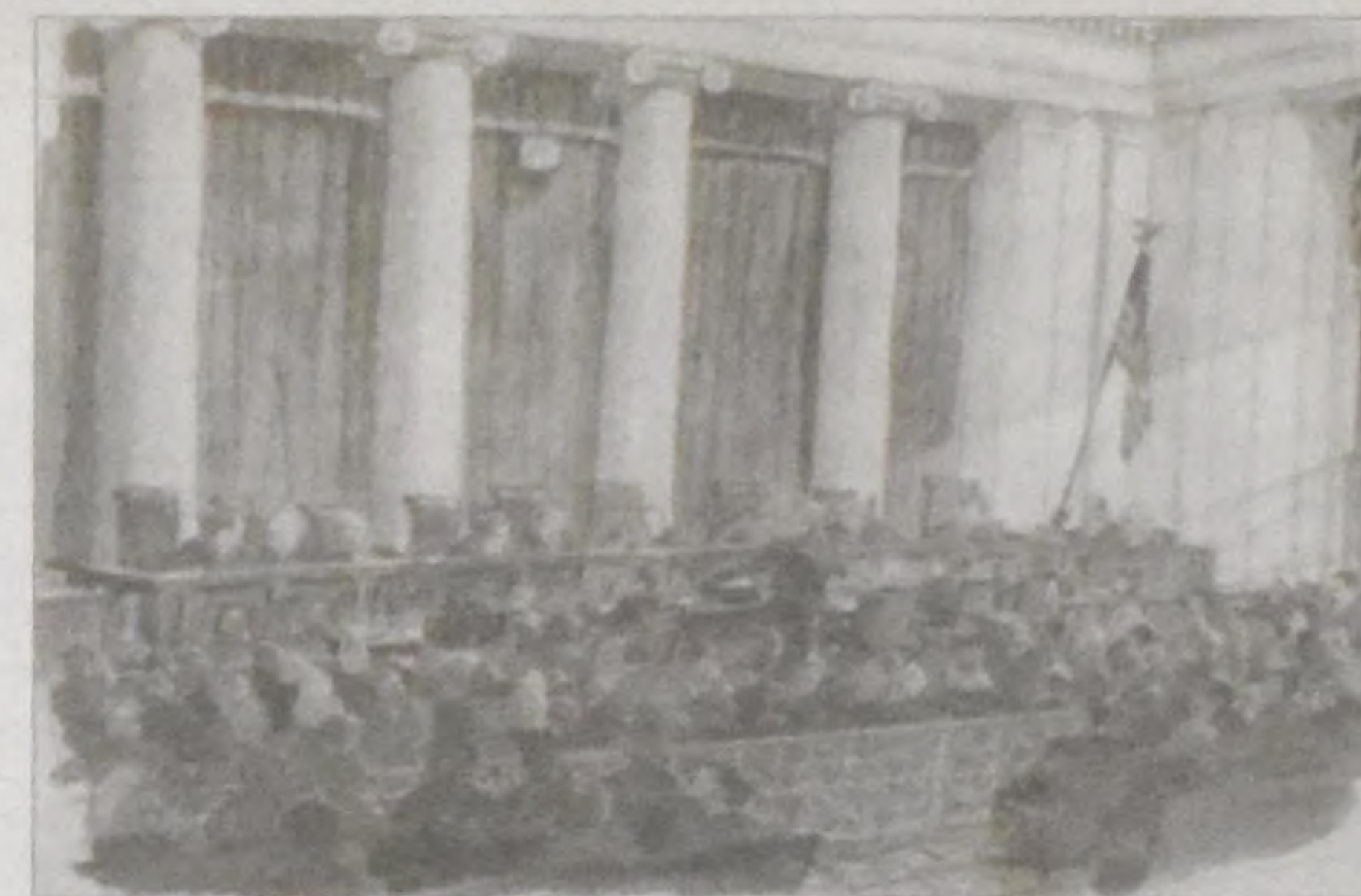
governments, and we in the United States are facing years of further litigation on this matter.

## Rights and freedoms

But marriage law is just the tip of the iceberg when we think about coming policy discussions related to the civil rights of gay men and women. The much more difficult issue is going to be protecting or balancing the rights of both the gay community and groups that reject homosexuality as a legitimate way of life. For example, in British Columbia Trinity Western University is trying to start the country's first Christian law school. The school is waiting for accreditation and it has come under criticism from the Canadian Council of Law Deans because Trinity's "community covenant" asks students, faculty and staff to refrain from homosexual relationships along with a variety of other behaviours. The Council says this discrimination against gay students violates core values of equity that are present in all Canadian law schools.

Trinity Western defends itself by citing a 2001 Supreme Court decision that found freedom of religion, conscience and association protects a private university's self-expression with covenants of this sort. It isn't clear what the accrediting body will do given the fact that Canadian law more clearly protects gay people today than it did 12 years ago when the Court first examined Trinity's covenant. As things stand, a Christian man married to another man could not go to the proposed law school. Should the government protect the gay Christian student? Or should it protect the self-expression of a faith-based school? It's a difficult question.

The challenge is even more complex when we change the focus from private non-profit organizations to for-profit businesses. In the state of Washington, a Christian florist has been sued by our attorney general because she



*Hollingsworth v. Perry court drawing.*

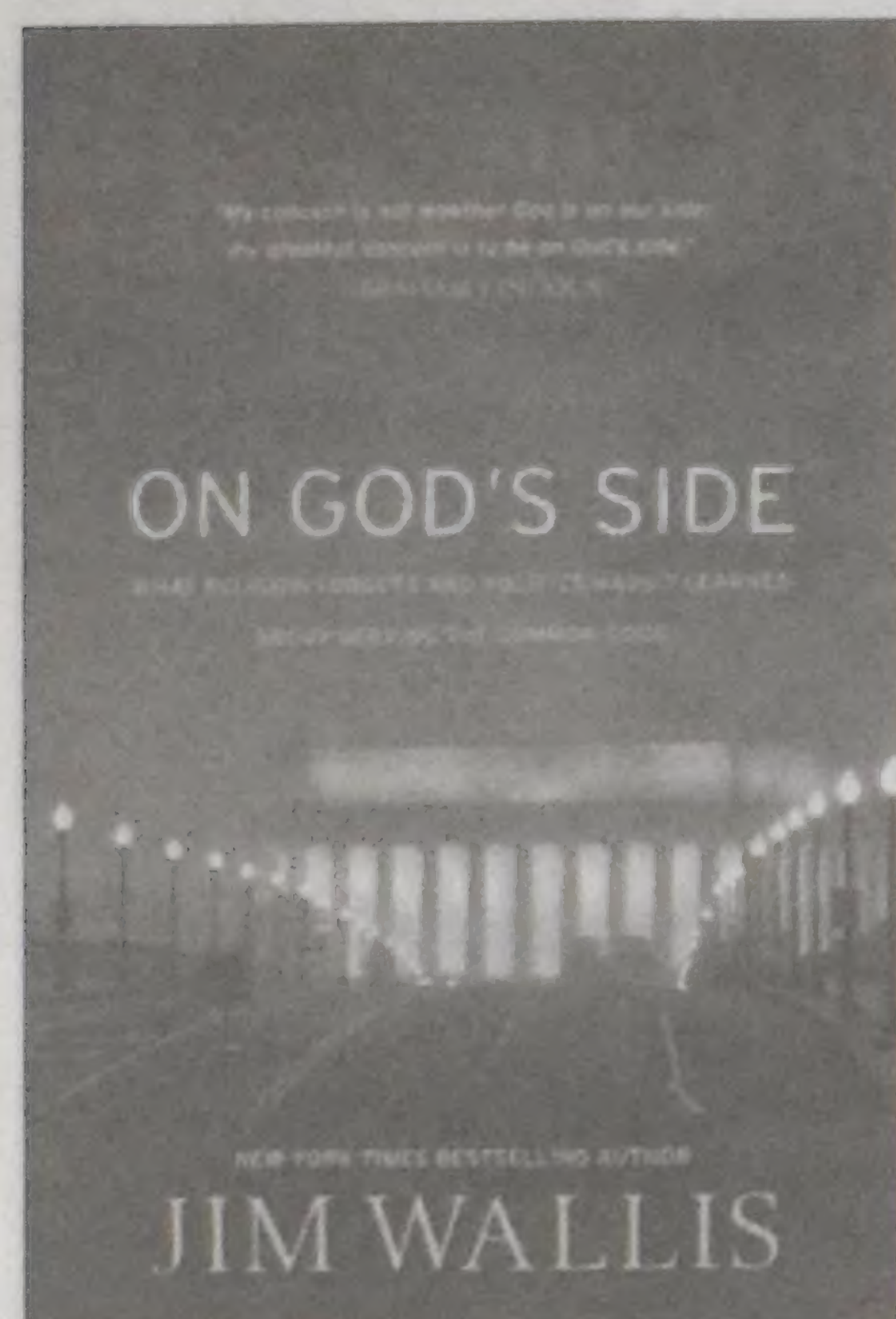
declined to provide flowers for a same-sex wedding. In our state if you sell a product or provide a service you must do so without discriminating on the basis of race, gender, religion, sexual identity and so forth. This law was shaped with a public justice concern for gay consumers, and this is an important consideration. But if we consider justice for the florist we want to allow her the room to do her work in accordance with her sincerely held religious belief. Should she be allowed to decline wedding services to gay couples? What if she decided to decline services to African American couples? Is this the same issue?

Christians have begun to consider what it means to do political justice to the gay community. But the policy conversations that will balance justice for the gay community and groups that reject homosexuality are going to extend into the coming decades. A public justice approach that recognizes responsibilities of different institutions, protecting the public square for all people, has great potential to shape this discussion. Next month's column will consider "principled pluralism" as a mechanism to help us talk through these challenges.

*Julia Stronks teaches political science at Whitworth University (affiliated with the Presbyterian church) in Spokane Wash.*



## Reviews



**On God's Side: What religion forgets and politics hasn't learned about serving the common good**

Jim Wallis  
Brazos Press, Baker Publishing Group  
c. 2013, 295 pages \$21.99 (US).

Could a stronger focus on the common good, as Wallis proposes, help to prevent polarization in Canada? The basic premise of the book, that all Christians should care about the common good, is solid. Wallis challenges some typical conservative and progressive ideas and identifies some specific priorities that could be common ground. The discussion on the role of government, however, requires more attention. There remains an open question: what is best for the common good and who decides?

Wallis starts with the basic premise that the Gospel is about more than the atonement. The Kingdom message of Jesus makes conversion from self-interest to neighbour-interest integral to the Gospel. Personal responsibility, a theme of the Christian right wing and social responsibility, a theme associated with the left, are both essential in a Kingdom vision. Other themes in this book are calls for civility in politics, hope rather than fear, and engaging in debate about policy options instead of personal, partisan attacks, which he describes as "ideological food fights."

This book, like previous ones, uses language that prods conservative readers to rethink some common assumptions. Wallis observes, for example, that a narrow atonement Gospel means that Jesus wasted three years of his life before going to the cross. American exceptionalism has really a low view of sin, says Wallis, and the mistake after 9/11 was to "reach for the flag, not the cross." More provocative is his assertion that Christians who promote a narrow atonement gospel often end up on the wrong side of justice in history.

On the other hand, Wallis reminds progressive thinkers that personal and household responsibility are essential to achieve the Kingdom vision, warning against an over-reliance on government to achieve societal goals. Working to strengthen all marriages, says Wallis, would be more productive than the polarized fight over same-sex unions.

One important theme for Canada and the United States is Wallis' call for a moral conversation about markets and our "uneconomy that is unfair, unsustainable, unstable, and unhappy" – the opposite of Biblical teachings. Wallis suggests that Christians lead a faith-based campaign against exploitative lending of all kinds, drawing on the strong Biblical teachings about freedom from debt. In another practical suggestion seeking common ground between left and right, he calls for an effort to reduce deficits without further harm to the poor.

The role of government is a topic that needs more analysis to bridge the left-right divide. The book's call to stop fighting about big or small government and focus on government as a servant of the common good is an attempt at finding common ground. Identifying the role of government as problem-solving and addressing what is wrong in society, however, limits government to a reactive role. In a Kingdom vision, good governance also has a strong preventive and pro-active role to foster the conditions for just relations, as well as correcting injustice.

The fault line in debates about governance is lack of agreement about what is best for the common good and who gets to decide what would be in our collective best interest. Yet that is a more productive debate than whether God is on the side of the conservatives or progressives. Still, more attention to the nature of Biblical justice and the role of government to do public justice is needed to advance the discussion in both Canada and the United States. ➤

Kathy Vandergrift, a long-time advocate for public justice, was raised in the U.S. and now lives in Ottawa.



## A Christian seeks the common good

Kathy Vandergrift

Jim Wallis has earned a reputation for being able to bridge the gulf between conservatives and liberals within the Christian community in the United States. In his latest book, *On God's Side*, Wallis finds common ground in the ancient concept of the common good. Rediscovering it, Wallis hopes, will help to end the ideological polarization that has made politics dysfunctional in the United States.

In Canada there is not yet the extreme ideological polarization of the United States, but trends point in that direction. Some political parties deliberately foster polarization as a tool to secure their voter base. Electoral calculations win seats by appealing to selected groups in a riding more than searching for the broad middle ground. Economic interests diverge as the wealth gap widens. Within religious communities there is a divide between those who focus on abortion and other sex-related moral issues and those who focus on social justice.

## A Pastor reflects on God's faithfulness through the journey



**When God Shows Up:  
A Pastor's Journey**

Henry Wildeboer  
Guardian Books, 240 pages.  
Available at:  
([essencebookstore.com](http://essencebookstore.com)  
All proceeds go to World Renew.)

is a "ministry to God and others." It's his hope that the book will encourage ministers of all stripes to have the courage, compassion, tenderness and love to do the job faithfully and well. The encouragement is definitely there, and so too, I should add, is a note of caution.

Wildeboer dedicates the bulk of this book to the middle part of his life in ministry. Nearly half of the book recounts the 14 years he spent as a pastor in Calgary (his longer tenure in Oshawa gets only a chapter or so). The Calgary recollections start off well, with Wildeboer noting a warm welcome to a growing church. But there are storm clouds on the horizon, and five or six years into his tenure there, he's embroiled in a controversy that stretches beyond his immediate parish to the Classis and ultimately to Grand Rapids.

You may find the Calgary chapters riveting, or they may make you even more cynical about the ways in which Christians are so often stubborn, contentious and awful to each other. Either way, Wildeboer's note of caution rings out clearly: if you're called to ministry (in whatever capacity), be prepared for a storm. Don't begin this vocation lightly; it's going to take every fibre of your being to push on through. Judging by Wildeboer's own life, that's especially true if you're a strong, self-assured leader with prophetic inclinations, or a progressive who wants to push the church forward and out of its comfort zone.

The Calgary story is described in some fairly fine detail. If you're a church polity nerd (a rare and endangered species), you'll have plenty of motions and overtures and church procedural issues to chew on. More interesting to me, however, were some related issues that get shorter treatment. I would've loved to hear more about Wildeboer's healing process after the dark days in Calgary. Aside from a short and marvelous chapter about that process, Wildeboer doesn't dig too deeply into what was surely a time of intense vulnerability and self-scrutiny. I also would have loved to hear more about what his experience has taught him about the role of progressive and prophetic leaders in the CRC. Are they fated to endure the slings and arrows of more conservative, comfortable folks? Or are there ways to gently lead and push and provoke people without bringing them to the breaking point?

Speaking of those sorts of folks, I couldn't help but wonder what Wildeboer's opponents' reaction to this book would be. Surely some people who remember the saga still linger in the CRC. Will they recognize the portrait he paints of them? Will the book be perceived as self-vindication or a cathartic tell-all? Or – drawing on the book's title – could it be the occasion for God to show up and foster some long-awaited reconciliation? What a testimony that would be!

As a minister myself, more or less at the outset of my career, I'm not wont to make too many predictions about where the church is heading. There's reasons to be hopeful, and reasons to be concerned. I finished Wildeboer's memoir feeling hopeful, as it is a compelling, reflective, and honest reminder of the faithfulness of God, who not only shows up in the midst of his people, but is there all along, walking beside them through the storms and the celebration. ➤

Brian Bork is CC's Review Editor and a CRC chaplain at the University of Waterloo and Wilfrid Laurier University.



Brian Bork

Decades of ministry in the Christian Reformed Church has given Henry Wildeboer quite the tale to tell. A warmly familiar one, too. If you're acquainted with the broad themes of CRC history, especially in its Canadian context, you'll recognize a lot of what Wildeboer has to say. There's the childhood in the war-ravaged Netherlands, and the upheaval of immigration. There's the impoverishment of those early days in Canada, eking out an existence as hired labour in rural Alberta. There's the warm hospitality of a fledgling CRC at the end of a long, chilly, Sunday commute in a 1941 Ford. There's the risk of enrolling in seminary, the first call, the agony of ecclesiastical squabbles and storms, and the well-seasoned wisdom and confidence of (semi)retirement.

A familiar story indeed, but that's not to say it's clichéd or excessively well-trod. I really appreciate these sorts of recollections, because they help bind us as a people; hearing stories of God's faithfulness is always encouraging, but when those stories are replete with familiar names and places, it really hits home.

Wildeboer has written this book for those who are called to ministry. That means ordained ministry, of course, but also folks who feel their everyday work



## Features

# Bearing witness to God's grace on campus and beyond

Cathy Smith

On July 4, 2013, Features Editor Cathy Smith talked with James VanderBerg by phone about Guelph Campus Ministry (GCM). This is an abridged version of that interview.

## Can you give us some background on GCM?

The vision of what we're doing here comes out in three ways. We're a Christian campus ministry that's eager to see students, staff and faculty grow in faith, build community (among themselves, but also among the broader community of campus) and engage the campus and the city, the whole time bearing witness to God's grace. That vision for campus ministry was grown in the early days when I started eight years ago with a number of students wanting to be deeply involved in their broader community both on and off campus. Those first students had a huge desire to be a part of something bigger than themselves and had a desire to see faith translated into action. So very early on there were four areas of ministry that we started working on in order to see that vision unfold.

**Worship.** Worship has definitely taken on different forms within GCM. It has been, at different times, a way for us to connect with other Christian groups on campus more collaboratively. So we've had joint worship services. At times it's also been a moment in our week for students and faculty to step aside and take a break, an intentional sacrificial step out of the daily grind of academic life. In those cases we would meet for morning worship at 7:30 in the morning, bright and early all winter long outside, enjoying Communion together. There is, in terms of worship, a deep desire among the students that I know to hear each other's voices and so we usually sing completely *a capella*. There's also a desire to be doing something new that is still connected to something old and something that has roots. It may be a result of a culture that has a lack of roots but they are looking for some kind of connection to the traditions of the church. So liturgy has played an important role in our worship over the years.

**Hospitality.** You can't do student ministry without food. In some ways, that goes without saying [laughs]. The centre of our hospitality ministry is Community Dinner. Every Wednesday the doors are open, churches cook food for us and we offer an agenda-free opportunity for students to connect with one another. Community Dinner is the place where Christian students feel most comfortable inviting their non-Christian friends. We eat together, enjoy each other's company and use that opportunity for fellowship to enrich the rest of our life as the community.

**Discipleship.** Discipleship is centred around our small groups, some of which I lead, some of which the other staff person leads, but the bulk of which the students themselves actually lead. Those small groups range from book studies to Bible studies to prayer groups. There is a regular Culture and Christianity lecture that we do and a collaborative week of events that we plan around the question "Who is Jesus?" and present that as kind of an outreach ministry to the university campus as a whole.

**Social justice.** If you took a quick survey of the university's population, this is how they would know GCM. We work closely with six organizations around the city of Guelph – for example, a drop-in centre downtown, an after-school program, working alongside the development worker in the Brant neighbourhood – so these organizations are ones that the students have developed a relationship with, being passionate about their work and encouraging other students to volunteer there. In an average week we'll



Building community.

have up to 50 students volunteering in different community organizations and doing on-campus projects and campus collaborative projects. I think of WUSC, World University Services of Canada, which is a group on campus that sponsors refugee students. Some of our key student leaders were deeply involved in WUSC activities and so our community was a part of welcoming those international students to campus.

Those four areas of ministry are very much a part of GCM and each of them has different students that are heading up various parts of the work. Leadership development is the unspoken central part of GCM – I would call it an area of ministry – but we don't necessarily put that on all of our promotional materials. We simply encourage the students to be involved and be active in their community and on campus in whatever shape or form they can. It started with a simple question that we asked each other, "What are your gifts and passions and interests?" and we encouraged each other to use those on campus and in the city. What I do most of actually is, not plan events because the students are fully capable of doing that, but meet with students and mentor them. We don't even call it mentoring. We read Scripture together, we pray together, we talk about where God's using them on campus and where God wants our community to go. These kinds of one-on-one conversations have been contagious. You'll often see older students meeting one-on-one with younger students,

asking them how their time at Guelph is going and what their experience is like and just enjoying good fellowship with one another.

*That's a very good overview. These seem to me to be appropriate and meaningful directions for 20-somethings!*

The beautiful part is the flexibility, and this is something that churches struggle with more than campus ministries. If you can create a community that's open to change, you can respond to whatever is happening on the campus and in the city. It's easier on campus because there's no history. The students come and they're here for four years and they graduate. So, every year there's a significant turnover. It means there's no memory, there's no people holding on to programs for longer than they should. In campus ministry that's not the issue at all; if anything, it's trying to keep things going from one year to the next.



Campus minister  
James VanderBerg.

## Can you describe the way your work was funded in the past?

The past was very different from what it is now. If you go far enough back, all the campus ministers were officially Home Missions (CRC) staff and Home Missions paid the salaries, provided living allowances and a bit of programming funds. Campus ministers were considered missionaries at home in the same kind of way that church planters were. For various reasons, and not just financial, Home Missions shifted away from that model and, for good reason, focussed on starting new campus ministries and creating professional development opportunities for the existing campus ministers. As ministry shares declined, Home Missions started encouraging campus ministers already in the 80s to look more locally for funding. Even before I arrived on campus, there was kind of a withdrawal from Home Missions in terms of direct support of the campus ministry and a greater reliance on Classis Huron. In fact, when I arrived, about a third of the budget would have been covered by Home Missions and two-thirds would have been covered by Classis Huron. That would have been different in different classes.

## How has that changed? What does funding look like now?

The financial support that Home Missions has been able to offer has continued to decline. Essentially they offer grants to campus ministries and start-up funds for new ministries. We now apply for grant funding from them and those grants are of a declining nature at this point. They decline by roughly \$2,000 a year. So we have seen that decline over the last eight years and knew it was coming and knew that we would be encouraged to find what was called "third-stream funding." If classis is first stream, Home Missions is second, then anything else is considered third-stream funding. We decided to be way more intentional about connecting with supporting churches – sending out newsletters every semester, preaching regularly in the churches to start telling the campus ministry story, developing relationships with donors who had a keen interest in the ministry, keeping track of alumni students who were graduating and staying in contact with their parents because their parents were, in many cases, deeply thankful for the work that had been done. If you look at our budget now, we're raising close to \$30,000 from individual donors. But the biggest piece for us, and kind of the surprising one, has been a recognition that the campus ministry, though Reformed in focus and



## Features



Winter retreat.

eager to see all of life captured under the lordship of Jesus Christ and eager to see faith integrated into the university academic life – and so maintaining a strong Reformed flavour – is clearly interdenominational. We have students from all kinds of different denominations. As a result, we started looking beyond the CRC and approached churches that were not CRC as well. A whole number of churches locally. Now there are six churches outside of the CRC that are strong supporters of GCM. For example, Kortright Presbyterian gave us \$5000 to hire a student intern last year and has been holding offerings for us and supporting the ministry in various ways. That has been the biggest change in how things have been funded. The classis continues to play a major role, Home Missions continues to play a role, but not as major as it once was, and support from outside of the CRC has grown significantly.

### Are there advantages to third-stream funding?

If I were to think of advantages to third-stream funding, a number of things come up. First, the more you tell the ministry story, even among the already supportive churches, the more supportive and excited they become about the work that you are doing. As you do that locally with churches, both CRC and non-CRC, you have people who start to come on board and say, “I love that vision for campus ministry and I want to participate in it.” They not only become donors and supporters but they become, in many ways, other campus ministers. Now that doesn’t always materialize with everyone, but I think of someone like Henk who is now on our Board. He’s part of the Crop Science department here at the university, and not from a CRC background. He started catching the vision for campus ministry and his primary contribution is now to meet with student leaders and pray with them and connect with them and support them in their role. In telling the story and in being forced to look for funding, you have the opportunity to invite people into the ministry in all kinds of different ways beyond just supporting it financially. So that, I would say, is the biggest benefit.

The other big advantage is that when you start to connect with non-CRC churches, you become known in the community as a ministry that is not bounded by denominational walls, and you have opportunity to bring different churches together and encourage them to work collaboratively. I would say Guelph has had a little bit of an awakening – churches are working more collaboratively

with one another. I wouldn’t want to give all the credit to GCM, but churches are seeing GCM as a shared project and when it’s going well, they start to look for other ways to connect with their brothers and sisters in Christ.

Another advantage I see is ownership on the part of the students. When students know there is a need to keep the community going and they’re invited to participate in that need and they start to tell the campus ministry stories themselves, they are blessed by going out and meeting new people. And they share the story way better than I do anyway. They get a sense of the bigger and broader Body of Christ. That’s a clear benefit to me when I think of the students’ experiences. It’s a really unique opportunity for them to sit at our coffeehouse for donors where we invite people from all church backgrounds who are supporting us and interact with them and see the broader Body of Christ at work.

Devin’s story is a great illustration of not only the different aspects of campus ministry, but also the ways in which he has been invited to tell his story and how that has blessed him. Devin is a student at Guelph who grew up in a family that wasn’t exactly open to the Christian traditions and to faith. In fact, his brother is very much opposed to him exploring his faith and going to church. He didn’t grow up in a Christian school or going to a church every Sunday. He struggled socially in high school and struggled with anxiety. Coming to campus, he met up with two students who were connected to GCM and they started to invite him to various things. Eventually, I invited him to come to our winter retreat. The theme for that winter retreat was Communion and we had lots of good conversations with Devin over that weekend. He came home from that retreat and read all of Scripture in two weeks and pretty much put his studies on hold which, given his academic ability, isn’t that big of a deal. I didn’t believe him and I kind of tested him in some ways afterwards to see, asking him random questions [chuckles], but he had clearly read all of Scripture in two weeks. With a lot of excitement. That began the journey of him asking lots of questions of faith especially of the two guys who had first invited him. They became spiritual mentors for him and really good friends for him. Devin started looking for



Community dinner

churches that fit his thought patterns and his new growing, budding theology. This past Easter was the first Easter he ever spent in church in his entire life. It’s a beautiful thing to hear Devin tell his story to a bunch of donors. In fact, in that context, and in the churches he has spoken in since then, I’ve seen growth in Devin as he’s come to articulate for himself what this has all meant, what this journey over the last two or three years has meant to him. So that’s why I say it is a blessing for the students to be a part of this project of fundraising.

### Are there any disadvantages to your present funding model?

One disadvantage is that it does take time. We did spend a lot of time, that first six months especially, trying to connect with all the alumni we had kept track of and follow up with people we knew were reading our newsletter. The flip side to that is you get more participation in ministry. The advantages outweigh the disadvantages, but it’s worth noting that it takes time.

It also takes a certain personality. Not all campus ministers feel like they have signed on for that. It takes a certain personality to go out and build relationships beyond just the campus and to see the community beyond the campus as part of and even integral to the work of a campus minister. Some might feel it’s like trying to sell campus ministry to a constituency. I’ve just never felt that. It has just felt like there’s a story to be told and God is doing something we should celebrate.

And, lo and behold, the funds come in. There was one year Classis Huron was supposed to have given \$60,000 and they ended up giving us \$74,000. We didn’t even ask for additional funds, but clearly the churches had heard of ministry happening and they were excited by it and their support came through in ways that caught us by surprise.

### Any other comments you’d like to add?

I think it’s fair to say that campus ministry is also about having a lot of fun. That’s something the campus ministry community, at least ours, has been able to do. They know how to have a good time together and just laugh. So as much as there are all kinds of serious and exciting things happening, there’s also pretty lighthearted and good moments when the community is together. ➤

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Church in the bullring



## Features

## Bi-vocational pastors: some musings

Rodney Hugen

We live in an age when the bi-vocational pastor is becoming more prevalent. As churches decline, the primary place to cut expenses is the pastor's salary. Pastors face the reality of leaving ministry or becoming bi-vocational. We may also require our missionaries and church planters to raise larger portions of their own support.

In reflecting on the bi-vocational pastor, one of the first considerations is answering the question of what a pastor might be able to do if not in full time ministry. Many pastors have only ever been pastors, so they might not be well-suited to other tasks. Others may have skills they developed early on in life, but that have lain dormant for many years. I was once a corporate financial officer, but my skills and knowledge of what it takes to do that job are long out of date. While I like to think that I could always go back to accounting, the truth is that I would not likely be able to do so.

A second concern for the bi-vocational pastor is the prioritization of jobs. Some jobs require working specific hours that interfere with church schedules. A local church planter friend of mine, Jimmy Hildebrandt, is pastor of a church plant called The Gathering. He worked part time as an instructor at a community college as well as taking on a seasonal Christmas job at a retail warehouse store. While he had some flexibility in teaching online classes at the college, the warehouse store had exacting requirements. The combination caused a good deal of stress and exhaustion as he tried to maintain balance. When I worked as a counselor for the local Teen Challenge ministry, I was able to make arrangements with them in advance so that I could attend denominational and classis functions, but it often created problems for both employers when there was a desire for me to be two places at once. The jobs one can do that allow for the constant attention required by church priorities are limited.

Another factor is the number of hours that one works per week. Pastors tend to have very flexible work hours, but they also tend to work long hours. Most church planters I know assume a 60 hour work week. Adding a 20 hour a week second job requires a good deal of negotiation with elders and leaders since anyone who has ever had two half time jobs knows that it can very quickly turn into two full time jobs. It is easy to exhaust oneself trying to please two masters and it is important to maintain reasonable boundaries.

Finally, it is difficult to find part time jobs that pay enough to make it worthwhile to take them on. In my job as director of the Tucson Cluster, a church planting effort in Tucson, I insisted that new church planters initially work bi-vocationally since this is a great way to connect with new people and make inroads into the broader community. Jimmy, The Gathering's pastor, says, "Working alongside others is how I best build relationships; it is where evangelism happens most naturally." Certainly, finding part time

employment is a great way to connect with others, but it very quickly becomes obvious that the kinds of jobs that meet the above expectations often pay low wages. When Jimmy worked part time at the warehouse store he made \$10.00 dollars per hour for a 25-30 hour work week, hardly enough to support a family of five. A church plant can be subsidized by the contributions of various agencies, the fundraising efforts of the church planter and the giving of those being gathered in, but as time goes on it becomes more difficult to continue to fund the ministry from outside. The temptation is to leave the work eventually and take a job elsewhere, either in ministry or out, in order to be able to provide for the family. I see many slow-growing church plants fold simply because the funding is no longer there to maintain them and the planter is unable to find sustainable

parttime work.

**As churches decline, the primary place to cut expenses is the pastor's salary. Pastors face the reality of leaving ministry or becoming bi-vocational.**

The primary benefit to working bi-vocationally, as mentioned, is that the pastor is "in the world." Bi-vocational work can become a gateway into the church as the pastor becomes more aware of the problems that coworkers and employers face. David Gainey, pastor of The Oasis at Rita Ranch, acknowledges, "Teaching at the community college isn't an addition to my ministry, but an extension of it." The apostle Paul worked as a tentmaker which allowed him to regularly interact

with suppliers and customers. But he also made it clear that he was entitled to be paid for his missional efforts. It is one thing to volunteer to work bi-vocationally and quite another to be forced to do so by circumstances.

### How do we covenant together to do missional work?

In 1 Tim. 5:17, 18 we are reminded that "The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honour, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, 'Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain,' and 'The worker deserves his wages.'" This double honour means that the pastor is worthy of both respect and remuneration. I find it fascinating that 11 tribes of Israel were able to care for the needs of the 12th tribe, the Levites, whose primary task was to minister before God and the people. As Christians we have opportunities to give to many causes — Christian education, feeding the poor, supporting those dealing with addictions and many other important ministries. It is

good to be reminded that a primal obligation is to provide for the pastors of our own churches. As new churches are being established, it is important to provide for the needs of those pastors and missionaries as they gather, evangelize and instruct people who do not yet understand generosity in the ways many of us have been taught.

There is an old Jewish line that reads "It is a good thing our rabbi fasts on Tuesdays and Fridays or he would starve to death." We smile at that, but it can be disheartening for



David Gainey, pastor of The Oasis at Rita Ranch, in Tucson, Ariz.

pastors who are no longer paid a full wage by their church community. While there can be any number of reasons for the pastor to not be fully paid, we need to be aware of the kind of pain, fear and struggle that can be created in the relationship between pastors and churches as the new reality is faced. As a person who has worked hard to find church planters to begin churches in Tucson, Arizona, I find myself offering very experienced church planters a financial package that is half of what they might make as pastor in an established church elsewhere. It is no wonder that I get so many people turning me down.

World Missions recently acknowledged that they now ask missionaries to raise 90 percent of their own support. Our missionaries, evangelists and church planters find themselves spending less time doing their primary work of reaching unbelievers with the gospel and more time either working bi-vocationally or raising funds. Less of what they love and are trained and called to do and more time serving coffee at Starbucks, selling insurance or doing warehouse work at Costco. That is sad.

Musings aside, it is always a joy to see how God cares for those who work hard among us as pastors, church planters and missionaries. God does provide generously for his leaders. I look around the house where I live and see paint and carpet and furniture and food that was given to me by those who love and care for my family and honoured God by providing for our needs. I am one of those people who have opened their mailbox to discover an anonymous financial gift from some generous person and have experienced the joy of having received God's good gifts through his people. ✂



Jimmy Hildebrandt, pastor of The Gathering in Tucson, Ariz.

Rod Hugen is a pastor at The Village and a church planter working for Classis Arizona (CRC).





## Features

## Intangible Things

Heidi Vander Slikke



July 1 dawned with all the hazy potential of early summer. Morning mist yielded to bright sunshine. Daylight stretched lazily into the evening hours. The sweet promise of two months of my favourite season dangled before me. I could not have guessed at what lay ahead for our family.

The phone rang just as we were leaving for the local fireworks display. Jack's sister Nellie told us that her husband Terry was in an ambulance heading to the hospital. He had collapsed with some puzzling symptoms.

For a few years already Terry suffered from neuropathy in his legs. The pain demanded powerful medication and made his life miserable. Somehow he continued working and tried to make the best of it. We sat in their backyard a week before, chatting about our kids, grandkids and holiday plans. Terry looked tired but content.

Now, after several tests, he was rushed to University Hospital in London. The neurologists scheduled him for emergency surgery to repair spinal compressions. In the operating room they discovered he had a broken neck – the result of a fall during the night four days prior.

Following the surgery Terry was intubated and sedated.

The very next evening, my brother Jim collapsed at home, suddenly unable to breathe. Emergency staff in Simcoe tried for hours to get him breathing again, but at last he was intubated, sedated and admitted to the ICU.

Jim was diagnosed with small cell lung cancer last winter. We knew it would end his life eventually, but he bravely endured several rounds of chemo treatments and seemed to be doing fairly well. He faced one more set of chemo, then radiation.

We had a family barbecue only two days before this incident. Though tired, Jim remained optimistic and we all enjoyed the afternoon together.

I drove back and forth to Simcoe a couple of times, offering what support I could to my sister-in-law Laila. Meanwhile, Nellie and her family maintained their vigil by Terry's side, waiting to see if he would ever breathe on his own again. Jack took his mom to London to visit.

My thoughts and prayers ricocheted from one crisis to the other. Terry had been my brother-in-law for nearly 35 years – a relative by marriage, a friend by choice, a talented man who loved to laugh and who was generous to a fault.

I thought of Jim – my big brother – strong, easy going and smart. When I was bullied at school he was my hero. He took me horseback riding, let me

drive his car when I was only 15 and walked me down the aisle the day I married Jack. We named our son after him.

Eight years my senior, Jim often got stuck looking after me as a child. He would perch me on the crossbar of his bike and wheel me all over town. Although it wasn't a very comfortable spot, I couldn't have been prouder than to be seen out and about with Big Jim B.

He saved up his money and bought a shiny red three-speed bike. The gears seemed to give him superhuman strength as we climbed steep hills without ever slowing down. I asked him how it worked.

"You wouldn't understand," he said whenever I asked.

I pestered him while he shined the chrome fenders one afternoon. Finally he began rambling on about gears and sprockets and revolutions per minute. I tried to look attentive and intelligent.

"There," he finally said. "You don't get it do you?"

"Sure I do," I lied. He grinned as I mounted the cross bar. Off we rode. All that really mattered was that he let me hang out with him.

Six days after Jim collapsed, Laila called me to the hospital. Lester, Jim's high school friend, and his wife Donna stood by the bedside. I knew what was coming.

They left me alone with my unconscious brother for awhile. Through tears I told him all the things that seemed most important – things that perhaps should have been said sooner, things I hoped he knew anyway.

Laila, Les and Donna and the ICU nurses returned. The tube was removed. The ventilator turned off. And we watched him quietly slip away.

Two days later Terry's ordeal ended under tragically similar circumstances.

Swept away by some spiritual tsunami, I had the wind knocked right out of me. Gasping for air, I cried out to God, "Why?!" A gracious echo rang in my mind. "You wouldn't understand."

True enough. With painfully limited understanding, I do not know what a day will bring. But I know who brings the day, who ordained it from eternity and who controls all that happens. I know I can trust him through stormy seas or rocky roads. What matters is that I'm with him.

Someday, when I'm ready, maybe he'll explain it to me.

Heidi Vander Slikke (hmvanderslikke@hotmail.com) lives in Harriston, Ont



Terry Martin, May 24, 1951 - July 10, 2013 (above). Jim Brutscher, Nov. 20, 1948 - July 8, 2013 (below).

## ARTFUL EYE



## The Trouble with Heaven

We try to decide how and what, when You chose to reveal very little.

Debate if we will know each other, what we will be doing.

Near death encounters add new dimensions we sort through, and draw conclusions, as if it mattered what our hypotheses are.

We only need to know that You will be there.

We only need to know that in Your prayer You said Your will is done there.

We only need to know that You said You will prepare a place for us.

Shouldn't that be enough?

Linda Siebenga

Linda Siebenga is a poet living in Central, Alta. Her latest work is *Earth Against Your Cheek*. Find Linda's website at [inscribe.org](http://inscribe.org) under Members.





## Columns

## Borderless

Brent van Staudum



Is it a salvation issue?

I tend to attribute my first exposure to this question to Father O'Reilly, the resident priest at the Catholic high school I attended in Ottawa. In truth, though, I

probably didn't learn it from him; we only spoke a few times. O'Reilly was the first Catholic priest I'd ever spoken to. He was also an incredibly godly and faithful man, which came as quite a surprise to this properly catechism'd, teenaged me. I suppose that's why I give him the nod for what has been a helpful touchstone in my adult Christian life, even though I could just as easily credit Sister Francis or the other students at St. Pius X with challenging every preconception I'd had about Catholics.

Imagine for a moment how a CRC kid, initially more interested in girls and the awesome sports teams at his new school than challenging his faith, might respond to a group of Christians who worship and pray as faithfully as anyone he knows. Or what language he might have to develop that encourages interfaith dialogue rather than the ejaculatory dismissal of all things Roman Catholic he's used to.

He strips everything but the prize away, wondering if these new friends will get to spend eternity in heaven like he will.

## An incomplete focus

It's a heavy indictment of my CRC upbringing that what concerned me more than anything else was being denied entry into heaven because I had squandered my election. Sure, there's some emphasis on the "to do" lists of our religion, living out our calling and commission to further the kingdom here on earth by serving and loving and sharing. But in the end, damnation is an effective motivator: it's not the earthly kingdom we're really working for, is it?

However, the Bible lays out the deal rather simply. Our starting point is belief in a certain saviour and the rest is the practical extension of that faith. Yes, it's simplistic, but at its core, faith – and by extension salvation – couldn't be more simple at all. If we believe, we're saved; if we don't, we aren't.

My new friends, then, met the standard. It was exciting to worship with them without agonizing about their eternal prospects or about whether I was risking myself over the theological justifications of my own denomination. The language became very simple: we were striving for the same things.

Since then, I have discovered that the root of the word salvation isn't about heaven, but about being freed to believe and do the work we've been commanded to do. But I have found that approaching conversations with other Christians – and the nonbelievers to whom we're called as

## One touchstone

witnesses – with that stripped down question in mind is a helpful method of discerning whether any given issue is important enough to argue about. Most of the time, it isn't, freeing us to be convicted by what we have in common rather than fragmenting ourselves over minutiae.

And we do love our minutiae.

## De-emphasizing the minutiae

I'm being reductionistic, but no matter how important the well-intentioned but inherently flawed extensions of our faith are, they very rarely hold the keys to salvation. Does it not reduce the faith of other Christians to suggest otherwise?

I think about how often we argue about issues that don't touch salvation by citing the minutiae, scriptural or human. I remember sharing my high school experiences with my landscaping boss years later, how he dismissed Catholicism whole, how gleefully he cited as proof the Heidelberg Catechism's old "damnable idolatry" clause. Or observing heated conversations at university that centred on the writings of saints like Luther, Calvin and Lewis but rarely acknowledged their distance from scripture. Being shamed by coffee-klatsch grilling of visitors to test their theological worthiness. The tragedy of churches splitting up when members refuse to search for grace.

I think we need to start more conversations with each other after asking whether salvation is at risk. We get so tied up in minutiae when we discuss the issues of the day that we alienate each other. And though important, treating issues like women in office, new/old earth creation theory, homosexuality, saint veneration, eucharistic terminology or a hundred others as salvation issues misrepresents who we are and what faith is truly about.

Whether or not our favourite theological and dogmatic fodder could *become* salvation issues is a topic for another, longer discussion. Still, I can't help but think that whether they are, are not or might be about salvation misses the point. All religion is the human effort to ritualize and standardize the ineffable nature of faith; every joyously feeble attempt, therefore, is as flawed as the fallen world in which we live and grow and die.

And in the end, we have to acknowledge that our efforts aren't the final word, either. Judgment always rests with God, a most humbling reality that points us back to a simple, common language for a Christ-starved world.

If we allow ourselves to search for it first. ➤

Brent and his wife Rosalee now live in the Westdale neighborhood of Hamilton, Ont. with their first child. To find out more about Brent and his writing, visit [brentvans.com](http://brentvans.com).



## Roots and Wings

Emily Cramer



Here it comes, the inevitable anxiety of September. It's been with me nearly all my life: as the wild freedom of summer ends and school looms, August is peppered with nerved-up sleepless nights. Now, as

a teacher, that familiar cycle is as real as ever, and this year, it is aggravated by the question of childcare for my daughter. One of my babysitters is suddenly unavailable, and I have to scramble to find an alternative. Looking for someone to whom I can entrust my precious girl is the worst kind of anxious experience I've known. My flight instinct is on high alert; I am ready to sell my house and move my whole family into a new situation just to avoid this.

And yet the reality is that this is me, face-to-face with the depths of myself. I am an anxious person, I worry, I like control, and truly, I do not trust God most of the time. It might even be all of the time, but let's reserve the benefit of the doubt. Anxiety for me is like a scratchy old sweater, so familiar I can tolerate the discomfort, and I'm no longer even sure what's underneath.

In a recent conversation with a mentor, I acknowledged something that's become increasingly clear in the last few months: I need to grow to the next level of spiritual maturity. Having a daughter has made me desire growth with new intensity. It'll be no use telling her how she should live if I can't model it. Through multiple embarrassing displays of shoddy behaviour on my part, God has been emphasizing areas where I am stuck and change is needed. The *what* has been shoutingly clear, but the *how*, not so much.

## Rewiring

And then, after another sleepless night, I found an early morning text on my phone from a family member. She had been praying for me and Philippians 4:6 came to mind. What else could it be? "Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God's

What if I commit to trusting God with every detail for a year?

## Project trust

wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life" (*The Message*).

It sounds so inspiring, a pretty obvious *how*, but I am so not good at it. In my faith life, I am Thomas through and through, always keeping one foot out of the car, always holding the back door open a crack just in case I need to run. There is always a "what if?" But the Bible is pretty plain: "Be anxious for nothing." It doesn't sound negotiable, more of an order, really. How on earth does one go about obeying it?

I don't know how to answer this exactly, but I'm hatching the idea of a project of radical trust, a mid-year resolution of sorts. What if I commit to trusting God for every last detail of my life for a year? What if I decide to think of every flicker of anxiety not as the edge of a steep cliff over which I'm about to tumble but as a call to prayer, an emotional alarm clock to get me on my knees? I'm not even sure what that kind of trust would look like, trusting not only for the clear material things like finances but for the subtler things like job satisfaction and relationships that have turned a little sour. The idea of not allowing myself even to worry about these things seems almost un-Christian. Isn't it kind of my duty to shoulder the burden of the wrongs I've committed and worry them into resolution? And yet the directive is difficult to mistake. Be anxious for nothing.

Giving myself a year seems like a nice round number, a doable goal and a nod to my inner Thomas that, at the end of it, the back door can always be reopened. Like all efforts at change, a goal is needed. And yet what I'm really hoping for is a total rewiring of these disobedient neurons that always lead me down the path to distrust and fear. I am hoping to get both feet inside and shut the door for good. ➤

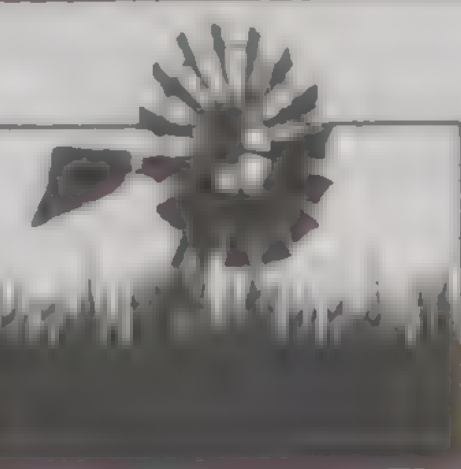
Emily Cramer lives in Barrie, Ont. with her husband and daughter and teaches in the Liberal Arts department at Georgian College. She has just finished Gil Adamson's peculiar novel with a perfect ending, *The Outlander*.



## Columns

## Country Living

Meindert Vander Gellen



I was very skeptical when the newly-elected Premier of Ontario, Kathleen Wynne, appointed herself as Minister of Agriculture for one year. We've seen many provincial urban greenhorn agriculture min-

isters come and go. Now we have a Premier from Toronto who wants to connect with rural voters to pick up rural seats. Being Minister of Agriculture has become a joke.

When Wynne's appointment was announced, farm organizations and commodity groups were in a difficult position. If they were negative about Ms. Wynne taking on the very ambitious undertaking of handling two jobs, they would surely find themselves out in left field. If they were supportive, they'd have her ear.

Even so, grassroots farmers and the farm press were dumbfounded when the leaders of Ontario's two main farm organizations came out in full support of the Premier taking on the agriculture portfolio. Mark Wales, President of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) said Wynne's double duty "brings a great profile to agriculture and rural Ontario."

The Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario (CFFO) was also positive: This "will be a great opportunity for the governing Liberal party to reconnect with rural

## Touring Ottawa Valley farms with Premier Wynne

Ontario. . . . The CFFO looks forward to working with the new Premier as she carries the Agriculture portfolio in the year ahead."

I asked CFFO President Lorne Small how he could say he was pleased with this development. Small said that agriculture would now have a much higher priority – the agriculture ministry is at the top. Other ministries are now asking – what can we do for agriculture?

Agriculture has certainly been in the news since Wynne became Premier and agriculture minister. But so were the tractor demonstrations a decade ago and that didn't help grain farmers back then. Will agriculture stay relevant when Ms. Wynne hands it over when the year is up?

## Right this way, please

I recently had the chance to meet Premier Wynne myself, and now I think it's best if she keeps the job for another few years. In August I was with a small group of farm leaders who followed the Premier on an OFA-sponsored, day long bus tour of Ottawa Valley farms, and I was impressed.

There were about 20 farm representatives, including Mark Wales, on the big tour bus when two colleagues and I got on in Renfrew at 8:30 a.m. The first stop was at a beef farm near Pembroke where breakfast was served. The Premier soon arrived for a 90-minute round table discussion held in a pasture field with a dozen farm commodity

leaders. Fifty or so beef cattle (cow-calf) were the only on-lookers. Only one person per commodity group could attend. The press was kept away.

Premier Wynne and a few of her staff got on the bus with us and a brief roadside stop was made at a field of hemp. There are a few hundred acres of hemp growing in the county. The next farm tour stop was at a large modern dairy operation that uses robotic milkers and runs a bio digestion system that is linked to Ontario's hydro grid. Ms. Wynne toured the operation and even went into one of the robotic milk stations and watched a cow being milked. She didn't squirm or suggest that she needed something over her clothes. We followed and watched.

With that tour over, we were bussed to a pork and produce farm at the outskirts of Ottawa where the mayor of Ottawa was waiting to greet the Premier. Lunch, in the shade, was corn on the cob and pork burgers. Ms. Wynne ate her cobs like we all do. Then it was on to the Canadian Cooperative Wool Growers in Carleton Place to tour the huge facility. A sheep was penned at the front door and a sheep shearer showed the Premier how shearing is done. He gave her the clippers and asked if she wanted to give it a try. To our surprise, Ms. Wynne took the clippers, bent over and did some shearing. That is, until she saw a little blood on the sheep and abruptly quit, saying, "I don't



At the Canadian Cooperative Wool Growers, Meindert watched Premier Wynne (r) shear a sheep.

want to hurt the poor animal."

Next stop was near Perth at an egg-laying operation where we enjoyed an outdoor luncheon. In a short speech she acknowledged the Liberals have work to do, after winning just two of the ridings in the recent by-elections.

Ms. Wynne is certainly a different kind of agriculture minister. Her predecessors would never have tried shearing a sheep in public. Not in good clothes.

*Meindert van der Gellen is a Renfrew-area farmer and not a member of any political party*

## Technically Speaking

Derek Schuurman



What is it about technology that seems to lead to pride? During the enlightenment period of human history (the "age of reason" during the 17th and 18th centuries), there were tremendous strides in

science and technology, but these brought with them a growing trust in the power of technology. Francis Bacon, a herald of the enlightenment, coined the phrase "Knowledge is Power." Faith and trust in the power of technology is sometime referred to as *technicism*, a term that Christian philosopher Egbert Schuurman describes as "the pretension of humans, as self-declared lords and masters using the scientific-technical method of control, to bend all of reality to their will in order to solve all problems, old and new, and to guarantee increasing material prosperity and progress." This attitude persists today, when people look to science and technology for the answers to the most perplexing problems faced by humankind. Modern social media brings additional pitfalls for pride and narcissism as people continually broadcast about themselves. It seems that the development of technology is often accompanied by increasing hubris

## Technology and pride

in human power and autonomy.

Greek mythology includes the story of Icarus, which cautions against this kind of hubris. It's the tale of a man whose father built him wings constructed of feathers and wax. He ignored warnings not to fly too close to the sun; the wax melted and he tumbled into the sea, where he drowned.

The Bible includes passages which speak of pride connected with technology. The tower of Babel (Gen. 11) tells the story of humans who built a tower to make a name for themselves (Gen. 11:4). In 2 Chronicles 26, we read of king Uzziah, who built strong towers, clever fortifications and invented effective military technology. We read "but after Uzziah became powerful, his pride led to his downfall" (v 16) and he was struck with leprosy until the day he died. Psalm 20 warns against placing trust in chariots and horses instead of the Lord.

## Idol forge

To be certain, technology is not the only source of pride; wealth, fame, power and accomplishments can all lead to pride. Pride can also be a challenge for professors – a profession built on establishing a glowing *curriculum vitae* (a fancy word

for an academic resume). Recognition is obtained by adding titles and letters to your name and adding publications to your credit. Academic awards, prestigious grants and fellowships are important measures of accomplishment along with the respect of your peers. I know firsthand that the position of a professor comes with pitfalls for pride.

Pride can even result from doing Christian work. We can develop pride in our gifts and abilities and even in our good works. We can develop pride in our Christian schools, churches and other institutions. We can even be proud of our theology. It seems many good things can be a source of pride. As Calvin said, the human heart is a perpetual forge of idols.

In Romans 12:3 we are reminded "Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you." In a paradoxical statement, 2 Corinthians 12 teaches us that God's power is made perfect

in weakness. In the sermon on the mount we are taught "blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3). In fact, we are told that God opposes the proud, but shows favour to the humble (James 4:6). In Proverbs we are warned that "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (16:18). In Micah we are also called to "walk humbly with our God" (Micah 6:8).

It is not technology itself that necessarily leads to pride, nor other human accomplishments. It is the state of the human heart. In Psalm 8, David considers the heavens and the works of God's hands, and wonders "what is mankind that you are mindful of them?" Christians who work with technology must cultivate a similar posture of humility, even as we explore and develop the powerful possibilities in creation.






*Derek Schuurman teaches at Redeemer University College. He can be reached at dschuurman@redeemer.ca*



Like Icarus, we can develop a foolish pride in our own work, even good work



Classifieds

Birthday	Anniversaries		Obituaries
<p>With thanks to God we rejoice in being able to celebrate the <b>100th Birthday</b> of our dear Mom</p> <p><b>Maria Dam</b></p> <p>on Sept 23, 2013 D.V.</p> <p>She has been blessed with good health, enjoyment of life and a sharp and active mind</p> <p>Celebrate with us at an <b>Open House</b> on Saturday, Sept. 28th, 2013 from 3-5 pm. at the Providence (Calvin) Christian School, 542 Ofield Rd N. (off Hwy #5) Dundas, Ont. 905-627-1411</p> <p><i>Best Wishes only.</i></p> <p>She is loved by her five children Joan &amp; Jack Buwalda Alida &amp; Cor VanderKruk René &amp; Ann Dam Christine &amp; Andrew Schaafsma Mieke &amp; Harold Groen</p> <p>as well as her 29 grandchildren, 70 great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandson</p> <p>Co-founder of William Dam Seeds and widow of Mr. William Dam (†1994).</p> <p>Home address: 279 Hwy 8, RR 1 Dundas ON L9H 5E1</p> <p><i>You can view Family ads on our website at christiancourier.ca Click on the family ads link on the bottom banner.</i></p>	 <p><b>BOB AND MARY VANDER VENNEN (Huissen)</b></p> <p>give thanks to God for 60 years of marriage which will be celebrated on September 17th.</p> <p>We thank God that he has enabled Bob to help build from their beginnings Christian university colleges like The King's and Redeemer and secure the Institute for Christian Studies. God also blessed Mary's psychotherapy service and musical performances.</p> <p>We also thank God for children Mark (Alice), Paul (Judy) and Kathy and seven grandchildren.</p> <p>Address: 1910 -1 Massey Square Toronto ON M4C 5L4 Ph: 416-690-4774 Email: vennen@esuile.ca.</p>	<p>Praise God for his faithfulness.</p> <p>Kingston September 23 Townsend 2013</p>  <p><b>JERRY AND FREDA VAN DYK (Span)</b></p> <p>Hope to celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary on Saturday the 21th of September, 2013.</p> <p>Love and best wishes from the children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren</p> <p><b>Open house</b> from 2-4 in the Jarvis Christian Reformed Church.</p> <p>Home address: 212B-72 Town Centre Dr Townsend ON N0A 1S0 Email: jrvndk@gmail.com</p>	<p>May 6, 1941 August 17, 2013 Ermelo, The Netherlands Tallahassee, FL</p> <p><b>George Roorda</b></p> <p>went peacefully to his Lord and Saviour at home with his family by his side at age 72.</p> <p>Beloved husband of Diane Vanderhill Roorda for 48 years</p> <p>Dear dad of Anthony &amp; wife Sally Jo, Daniel, Douglas &amp; wife Hannah, Cheryl Roorda &amp; husband Zachary Smith.</p> <p>Always remembered by 10 grandchildren, brother Andy, sisters Marianne and Jill, and many nieces and nephews</p> <p>Predeceased by parents John &amp; Elizabeth Roorda.</p> <p>A memorial praise service was held at Wildwood Presbyterian Church of Tallahassee, FL on Aug. 21, 2013.</p> <p>Correspondence: Diane Roorda 106 Tryon Dr Tallahassee FL 32312</p>
	  <p>1963 19 September 2013</p> <p>With thanksgiving and joy to God we celebrate the 50th wedding anniversary of</p> <p><b>KLAAS BROBBEL &amp; NELLIE BROBBEL (van Driel)</b></p> <p>Congratulations from:</p> <p>Peter &amp; Janice Brobbel Matthew, Daniel Floyd &amp; Vanessa Brobbel Caleb, Harmony, Jesse</p> <p>Carla &amp; Richard Hoiting Jordan &amp; Amanda – Anen, Eli Nicholas, Vashti, Nathaniel, Jessica</p> <p>Address: 115 Russell Drive Oakville ON L6H 1L4</p>	<p>With thanks to God, the family of</p> <p><b>OSCAR AND ALICE DEBOER (nee Linker)</b></p> <p>celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on September 6, 2013</p> <p>Praise be to God for His blessings and faithfulness.</p> <p>Ray &amp; Tetcy DeBoer - Strathroy Craig, Joseph Catherine &amp; Peter Graansma – Woodstock Jenna, Bronson, Sierra Paul &amp; Yueh-Chin Ma DeBoer - Woodbridge Sharon and Daniel Mainville – Ottawa Joseph</p> <p>Address: 12 Thomas St. Chatham ON N7M 5N8</p>	<p>Lovingly remembered by:</p> <p>Sylvia, London Jerry &amp; Carol, Blenheim Bill &amp; Marlene, Blenheim Rick &amp; Yeny, Blenheim Marg, Brampton</p> <p>11 grandchildren, 11 great- grandchildren</p> <p>A funeral service celebrating Wietske's life was held at the Blenheim Christian Reformed Church on Saturday, July 20th with Rev. J. Kerkhof officiating, followed by interment at the Evergreen Cemetery, Blenheim.</p> <p>Correspondence: M. Wymenga 86 Lent Crescent Brampton ON L6Y 4X7</p>
		 <p><b>COR AND ALIDA VANDERKRUK</b></p> <p>With thankfulness to God, we wish to announce our 50th Wedding Anniversary.</p> <p>We celebrate with our 6 children and spouses, 20 grandchildren, family and friends with an</p> <p><b>Open House</b></p> <p>Saturday, September 21, 2013 at 7:30 -10 pm. Place: Cannon Nurseries Garden Center 383 Dundas Street (Hwy# 5) Waterdown, Ontario</p> <p>Home address: 383 Parkside Drive Waterdown ON L0R2H0</p>	<p><b>Fred (Feite) Greidanus</b></p> <p>went home to his Lord on August 9, 2013 in his 93rd year.</p> <p>Beloved husband of Lolkje for 67 years. Cherished Dad, Pake and Pake-Pake!</p> <p>Correspondence: Holland Christian Homes, 202 - 7950 McLaughlin Rd. S. Brampton ON L6Y 5V9</p>
<p><b>Vacation Rentals</b></p> <p>Holiday accomodation in Holland with vehicle rentals, tours. Website: <a href="http://chestnutlane.nl">chestnutlane.nl</a></p> <p><b>Two Florida Pool Homes for Rent</b> 3 bed, 2 bath in beautiful Cape Coral Florida. For pictures and reasonable rates contact Glen at 519-863-6965 or e-mail: <a href="mailto:mgsikma@xplornet.com">mgsikma@xplornet.com</a></p> <p><b>Fall in Florida</b> and enjoy the extended Summer! Fort Myers canal home for rent - Oct., Nov., Dec. 2013 and April 2014. Reasonable rates. Call Michael at 905-332-6711 to make arrangements.</p>	<p><b>MARANATHA CRC</b> in Belleville, Ont. will celebrate its <b>60th anniversary</b> on <b>October 5 &amp; 6, 2013.</b></p> <p>A neighbourhood BBQ and open house will be held on Saturday, Oct. 5 as well as a banquet that night and a celebration service Sunday morning.</p> <p>For details contact the church at 613-962-2062 ext. 200 or email <a href="mailto:info@maranatha-church.com">info@maranatha-church.com</a>.</p>		<p><b>Harm Willem "Herman" Eikelboom</b></p> <p>On Tuesday, August 20, 2013, the Lord took unto Himself Herman Eikelboom.</p> <p>Beloved husband of Mieke (nee Snaterse) for 50 years.</p> <p>Much loved and respected father and grandfather of:</p> <p>Marcella &amp; Friz Buist Katherine, Marcus, Janelle, Willem Brian Eikelboom Anne Maria, Megan Randall &amp; Sonya Eikelboom Owen, Marissa, Tyler Peter &amp; Ronda Eikelboom Hayd'n, Joshua, Rohen Jen &amp; Kevin Drenth Ian, Eli</p> <p><i>"I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand."</i> John 10:28</p> <p>Correspondence: M. Eikelboom 33 Maplewood Crt Dunnville, ON N1A 3G8</p>



# Classifieds

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Direct all inquiries to Mr. Loren Veldhuizen  
Executive Director Search Committee Chair  
[veldhuizen45@gmail.com](mailto:veldhuizen45@gmail.com)

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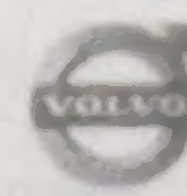
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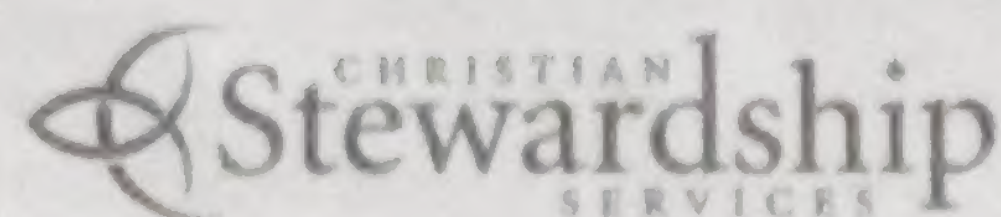
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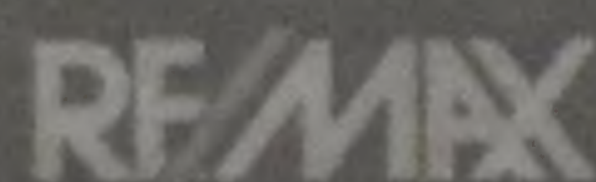
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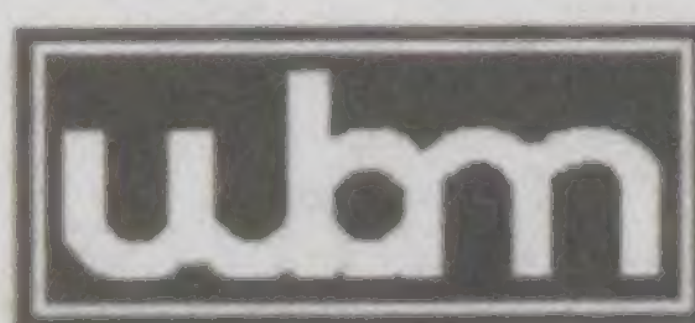
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# Events/Advertising

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Oct 5** Netherlands Bazaar, **Thornhill** Community Centre, 7755 Bayview Ave. Free admission. See ad.
- Oct 5-6** Maranatha CRC in **Belleville**, Ont. will celebrate its 60th anniversary with a BBQ and open house, banquet. Celebration service Sunday morning. For details, see ad or contact the church at 613-962-2062 ext. 200 or email [info@maranatha-church.com](mailto:info@maranatha-church.com).
- Oct 16** Leendert Kooij and the Ontario Christian Music Assembly (OCMA), Andre Knevel, Liselotte Rokyta and others will host a Benefit Concert, 7:30 pm at the Hebron Christian Reformed Church, **Whitby**, Ont. For info, contact Rob Datema – [rob@light-housecentre.ca](mailto:rob@light-housecentre.ca) or 416-535-6262.
- Oct 19** Benefit Concert, 7:30 pm at the Georgetown Christian Reformed Church, **Georgetown**, Ont. See above event details.
- Oct 19** Day of Encouragement Hamilton District Christian High, Ancaster, Ont. Details online at [diaconalministries.com](http://diaconalministries.com)
- Oct 19-20** Willowdale CRC, **Toronto**, celebrating 50 yrs. See ad p. 17.
- Oct 20** Dutch Service will be held in the Ancaster Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. John Breedveld will be preaching.
- Oct 25** Christian Festival Concert. Toronto. See ad for details.
- Oct 31-Nov 2** Andreas Center Conference. Dordt College. More info at: [dordt.edu/events/conference2013/](http://dordt.edu/events/conference2013/)
- Nov 10** Grace CRC Scarborough, Ont. celebrating 50 years. Former members and friends are invited for a celebration service, light lunch and program Sunday. See <http://gracecrcscarborough.sharepoint.com> for updates.

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## Willowdale CRC

of Toronto, Ont.  
will be celebrating **50 years** of  
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House, Dinner** and a **Special  
Worship Service** being planned  
for the weekend of Saturday and  
Sunday

**October 19th & 20th, 2013.**

For more information on times  
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website: [www.willowdalecrc.com](http://www.willowdalecrc.com),  
or email us at [fifty@willowdalecrc.com](mailto:fifty@willowdalecrc.com), or call the church  
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We look forward to reconnecting  
with our former members!

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## Grace CRC

in Scarborough, Ont.  
is seeking to give thanks and praise  
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invited to join us for a celebration  
service, light lunch and program  
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See

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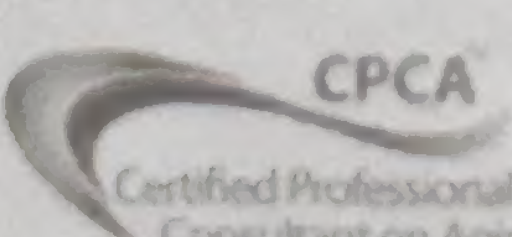


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## News

## A dirty job

Rita Klein-Geltink

"That's how we've always done it," is a refrain heard in our churches on a somewhat regular basis. Whether it's the songs we sing or how we serve our coffee, there is something comfortable and non-threatening about the familiar. For that reason, we may be hesitant to critically assess how we do things. This is just as true at the denominational level as it is in a congregational setting.

The Christian Reformed Church (CRC) has a sometimes uncomplimentary reputation for our fondness of committees. Most of our churches' committees are standing committees; they enjoy perpetual existence. Only occasionally will we establish an ad hoc committee with very specific goals and a distinct time line and end date.

The corporation of the CRCNA has the same love for structure and organization, only at this level we call them "agencies" rather than "committees." Our agencies are, in effect, standing committees. Perhaps it may be time to consider if "the way we've always done it" is the way we should continue to do it.

Since its inception in 1857, the CRCNA has developed and then sought to fulfil a mission:

*As people called by God,  
We gather to praise God, listen to him,  
and respond.*

*We nurture each other in faith and  
obedience to Christ.*

*We love and care for one another as  
God's people.*

*We commit ourselves to serve and to  
tell others about Jesus.*

*We pursue God's justice and peace in  
every area of life.*

It's a beautiful mission statement, an

ambitious one, encompassing a vision of God's Kingdom as so much more than an eschatological reality. The Kingdom of God is also a present spiritual reality. And while the Kingdom of God will exist into eternity, it may be time to question the "perpetual existence" of the corporation that is the CRCNA as we know it.

## The end is not nigh

Corporations have a tendency to evolve from being mission-driven towards an ethos of self-preservation. We produce extensive documents which detail the programs and initiatives we promote.

Directors and staff meet regularly as stipulated by the agency's five-year plan. We measure the effectiveness of our programs against an internal grid produced by our own directors and board members.

It all sounds good. There's a conviction that our agency is of vital importance. It is unlikely that the next annual meeting would include a discussion on the "end date" of the agency. Such a conversation would be counter intuitive, and highly unpopular. I don't expect any of our agencies to come to synod 2014 with a proposed "end date" for their agency, supported by the conviction that they had fulfilled their mission to the best of their ability.

But perhaps that may be the direction the CRCNA should consider. Our agencies have served well. They have raised awareness, they have educated us, they have prodded us into action. The time may have come to celebrate their work and then to pass the baton on to others.

For demonstrative purposes, consider several of our CRCNA agencies, in no particular order.

## Safe Church

Our churches now have policies in place to safe guard our most vulnerable members. Every church has windows in the doors of the classrooms and offices. Volunteers submit to police checks. Well done, Safe Church Agency! The work now continues, but insurance companies, the Children's Aid Society, and social professionals are now the resources we use. Parachurch organizations such as Shalem Mental Health Network in Ontario provide counseling and guidance.

## Pastor Church Relations

Yes, I am fully aware that Pastor-Church Relations have not yet worked themselves out of a job. I have seen the statistics on the number of Article 17 separations (*Christian Courier* Feb. 11, 2013). We may need a more localised strategy. Organizations like the Central Mennonite Committee offer conflict management strategies that may be more ef-

fective than sending in the denominational experts – something that usually happens, unfortunately, too late in the process.

## Race Relations

This agency needs to speak a different language in our American urban centres than it will in rural Ontario, for example. The work of developing a cross cultural, inclusive and diverse church may be better executed at the classical level than at the denominational level. Recent discussions in Canada have underscored how the different U.S. and Canadian contexts require totally different approaches.

## Disability Concerns

Here's another agency that has done a great job of raising consciousness of the physical restrictions we unintentionally impose upon some of our most vulnerable members. Our churches are installing lifts and ramps; they are providing hearing assistance and fragrance-free seating. The Friendship Program is a faithful witness in many churches and we are growing in our understanding and compassion for those dealing with psychological and mental issues. The real work, in this area, is at the congregational level and within our communities.

**Corporations have a tendency to evolve from being mission-driven towards an ethos of self-preservation.**

## Faith Alive

It is already revisiting its modus operandi. There are a lot of reputable publishing houses out there. To work in cooperation with one or more of these companies may be the better strategy.

## Home Missions

The name of the agency itself suggests that this ministry should be operating "at home," rather than at corporate headquarters.

## Calvin College

While I'm at it, let me throw in this one. Calvin's sister Christian colleges receive regional support, but they are not designated as agencies of the CRC. Such a model may be more suitable for Calvin College as well.

The strength and ingenuity of the CRCNA's Ministry Shares approach to fi-



"Still Life with Disabilities" by Curt Gesch.

nancial support is that we can accomplish much more together than we can individually. The premise is still true. A denominational seminary where our pastors are trained and equipped to serve in the CRC is vital to the entire CRCNA. The Worship Institute is a valuable resource for all our churches. Faith Alive's Church School curriculum development gives us confidence in selecting

materials for our teaching programs; we may want to hang onto that.

The streamlining process may go even further. Let's reduce the size of the Board of Trustees, eliminating some of the meetings and make Synod a bi-annual event. Not primarily in order to save money (though the stewardly use of our resources should always be a priority), but in order to fine tune the corporation which is the CRCNA.

Changes such as these, which would include "end dates" for some agencies and drastic reconfiguration of others, will never come from within the organization itself. Jobs will be lost, offices will stand empty. The Board of Trustees would not dare to suggest such drastic measures. What we need is an Executive Director who has the vision and foresight to see such changes not as defeat, but as affirmative and progressive action that will see the CRCNA moving into a new reality. We can celebrate what has been accomplished while recognizing that new methodologies and strategies will mean a more effective witness for Christ.

The CRCNA has been searching for a new Executive Director for over a year now, with no indication that we are getting any closer to filling the position. Perhaps that is because the person who takes on such a task will not win any popularity contests. Who in his/her right mind would want to take on such a project? It's a dirty job, and that may be why no one wants to do it.

The way we've always done things has served us well. But it may be time to consider if the way we've always done it is the way we should continue to do it.

Rita Klein-Geltink is the Senior Pastor at Ancaster CRC. This is the second church she is pastoring. She spent 12 years in administration at Redeemer University College.



Most of our church committees enjoy perpetual existence.